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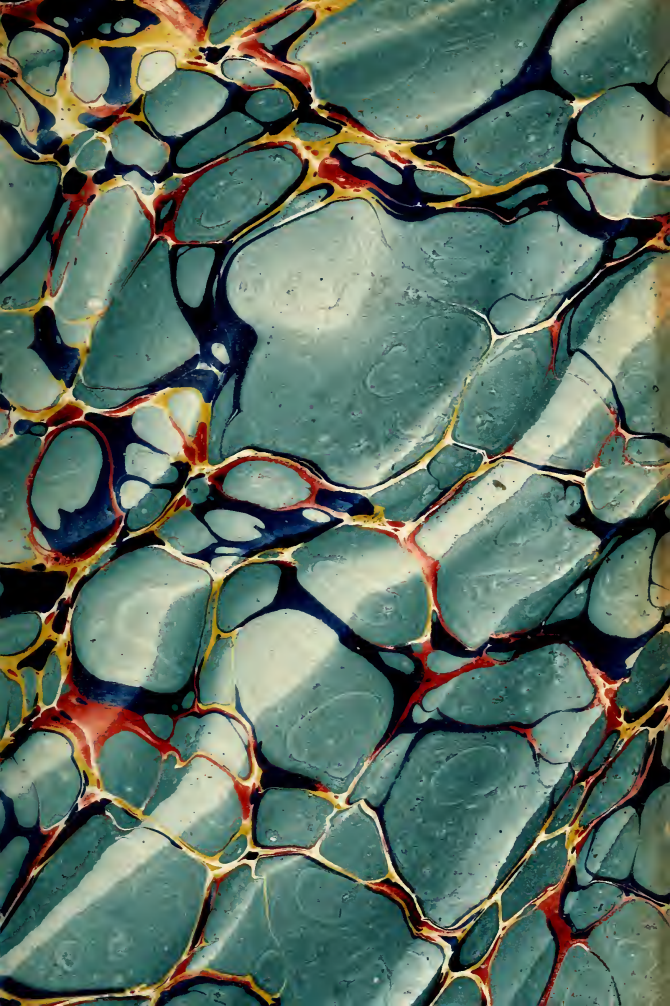

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Robert Burns — Poet

BORN JANUARY 1759 DIED JULY 1796.

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THE

WORKS

OF

ROBERT BURNS;

WITH

HIS LIFE,

BY

ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

"High Chief of Scottish song!
That could'st alternately impart
Wisdom and rapture in thy page;
And brand each vice with satire strong,
Whose lines are mottoes of the heart,
Whose truths electrify the sage."
Campbell.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

With something of hope and fear, I offer this work to my country. I have endeavoured to relate the checquered fortunes, delineate the character, and trace the Illustrious Peasant with candor and accuracy: his farming speculations —excise schemes—political feelings and poetic musings are discussed with a fulness not common to biography: and his sharp lampoons and personal sallies are alluded to with all possible tenderness to the living and respect for the dead.— In writing the Poet's Life I have availed myself of his unpublished journals, private letters, manuscript verses, and of well-authenticated anecdotes and traits of character supplied by his friends; and I have arranged his works as much as might be in the order of their composition, and illustrated them with such notes, critical, historical, and biographical, as seemed necessary. Of verse, one hundred and odd pieces will be found in this edition, more than Currie's octavo contains. The number of letters, too, are materially increased—but nothing is admitted which bears not the true Burns' stamp. The embellishments are of high merit: the portrait of the Poet has called forth the commendation of several who had the honor of his acquaintance.

A. C.

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THE LIFE

OF

ROBERT BURNS.

PART I:—AYRSHIRE.

The national poetry of Scotland, like her thistle, is the offspring of the soil. To the poems of our first James, the strains of forgotten minstrels, or the inspiration of shepherds and husbandmen, its origin has been ascribed. Where proof cannot be procured, we must be content with conjecture: classic or foreign lore can claim no share in the inspiration which comes from nature's free grace and liberality. From whatever source our poetry has sprung, it wears the character and bears the image of the north: the learned and the ignorant have felt alike its tenderness and humor, dignity and ardor; and both have united in claiming, as its brightest ornament, the poetry of Him of whose life and works I am now about to write. This, however, has already been done with so much affection by Currie, care by Walker, and manliness by Lockhart—the genius, the manners, and fortunes of Burns have been discussed so fully by critics of all classes, and writers of all ranks, that little remains for a new adventurer in the realms of biography save to extract from the works of others a clear and judicious narrative. But, like the artist who founds a statue out of old materials, he has to reproduce them in a new shape, touch them with the light of other feeling, and inform them with fresh spirit and sentiment.

Robert Burns, eldest son of William Burness and Agnes Brown his wife, was born 25th January, 1759, in a clay-

built cottage, raised by his father's own hands, on the banks of the Doon, in the district of Kyle, and county of Ayr. The season was ungentle and rough, the walls weak and new:—some days after his birth a wind arose which crushed the frail structure, and the unconscious Poet was carried unharmed to the shelter of a neighbouring house. He loved to allude, when he grew up, to this circumstance; and ironically claim some commiseration for the stormy passions of one ushered into the world by a tempest. This rude edifice is now an alehouse, and belongs to the shoemakers of Ayr: the recess in the wall, where the bed stood in which he was born, is pointed out to inquiring guests; the sagacious landlord remembers, too, as he brings in the ale, that he has seen and conversed with Burns, and ventures to relate traits of his person and manners. There is nothing very picturesque about the cottage or its surrounding grounds: the admirers of the Muses' haunts will see little to call romantic in low meadows, flat enclosures, and long lines of public road. Yet the district, now emphatically called "The Land of Burns," has many attractions. There are fair streams, beautiful glens, rich pastures, picturesque patches of old natural wood; and, if we may trust proverbial rhyme, "Kyle for a man" is a boast of old standing. The birth of the illustrious Poet has caused the vaunt to be renewed in our own days.

The mother of Burns was a native of the county of Ayr; her birth was humble, and her personal attractions moderate; yet, in all other respects, she was a remarkable woman. She was blessed with singular equanimity of temper; her religious feeling was deep and constant; she loved a well-regulated household; and it was frequently her pleasure to give wings to the weary hours of a chequered life by chaunting old songs and ballads, of which she had a large store. In her looks she resembled her eldest son; her eyes were bright and intelligent; her perception of character, quick and keen. She lived to a great age, rejoiced in the fame of the Poet, and partook of the fruits of his genius.

His father was from another district. He was the son of a farmer in Kincardineshire, and born on the lands of the noble family of Keith Marischall. The retainer, like

his chief, fell into misfortunes; his household was scattered, and William Burness, with a small knowledge of farming, and a large stock of speculative theology, was obliged to leave his native place, in search of better fortune, at the age of nineteen. He has been heard to relate with what bitter feelings he bade farewell to his younger brother on the top of a lonely hill, and turned his face toward the border. His first resting-place was Edinburgh, where he obtained a slight knowledge of gardening; thence he went into Ayrshire, and procured employment, in the double capacity of steward and gardener, from Ferguson of Doonside. Imagining now that he had established a resting-place, he took a wife, leased a small patch of land for a nursery, and raised that frail shealing, the catastrophe of which has already been related.

During his residence with the laird of Doonside, a rumor was circulated that William Burness had fought for our old line of princes in the late rebellion—the fatal 1745. His austere and somewhat stately manners caused him to be looked on as a man who had a secret in reserve, which he desired to conceal; and, as a report of that kind was not calculated for his good, he procured a contradiction from the hand of the clergyman of his native parish, acquitting him of all participation in the late "wicked rebellion." I mention this, inasmuch as the Poet, speaking of his forefathers, says, "they followed boldly where their leaders led," and hints that they suffered in the cause which crushed the fortunes of their chief. Gilbert Burns, a sensible man, but no poet, imagined he read in his brother's words an imputation on the family loyalty, and hastened to contradict it, long after his father had gone where the loyal or rebellious alike find peace. He considered his father's religious turn of mind, and the certificate of his parish minister as decisive: and so they are, as far as regards William Burness; but the Keiths Marischall were forfeited before he was born,and the Poet plainly alludes to earlier matters than the affair of the "Forty-five."—"My ancestors," he says, "rented lands of the noble Keiths Marischall, and had the honor of sharing their fate. I mention this circumstance, because it threw

my father on the world at large." Here he means that the misfortunes of the fathers were felt by the children; he was accurate in all things else, and it is probable he related what his father told him. The feelings of the Poet were very early colored with Jacobitism.

Though William Burness sought only at first to add the profits of a small stewardship to those of a little garden or nursery, and toiled along with his wife to secure food and clothing, his increasing family induced him to extend his views; and he accordingly ventured to lease Mount Oliphant, a neighbouring farm of a hundred acres, and entered upon it when Robert was between six and seven years old. The elder Burns seems to have been but an indifferent judge of land: in a district where much fine ground is in cultivation, he sat down on a sterile and hungry spot, which no labor could render fruitful. He had commenced, too, on borrowed money; the seasons as well as the soil, proved churlish; and Ferguson his friend dying, "a stern factor," says Robert, "whose threatening letters set us all in tears," interposed; and he was compelled, after a six years' struggle, to relinquish the lease. This harshness was remembered in other days: the factor sat for that living portrait of insolence and wrong in the "Twa Dogs." How easily may endless infamy be purchased!

From this inhospitable spot William Burness removed his household to Lochlea, a larger and better farm, some ten miles off, in the parish of Tarbolton. Here he seemed at once to strike root and prosper. He was still strong in body, ardent in mind, and unsubdued in spirit. Every day, too, was bringing vigor to his sons, who, though mere boys, took more than their proper share of toil; while his wife superintended, with care and success, the whole system of in-door economy. But it seemed as if fortune had determined that nought he set his heart on should prosper. For four years, indeed, seasons were favorable, and markets good; but, in the fifth year, there ensued a change. It was in vain that he labored with head and hand, and resolved to be economical and saving. In vain Robert held the plough with the dexterity of a man by day, and thrashed and prepared corn for seed or for sale, evening and morning, before the sun rose and after it set. "The gloom of

hermits, and the unceasing moil of galley slaves" were endured to no purpose; and, to crown all, a difference arose between the tenant and his landlord, as to terms of lease and rotation of crops. The farmer, a stern man, self-willed as well as devoutly honest, admitted but of one interpretation to ambiguous words. The proprietor, accustomed to give law rather than receive it, explained them to his own advantage; and the declining years of this good man, and the early years of his eminent son, were embittered by disputes, in which sensitive natures suffer and worldly ones thrive.

Amid all these toils and trials, William Burness remembered the worth of religious instruction, and the usefulness of education in the rearing of his children. The former task he took upon himself, and, in a little manual of devotion still extant, sought to soften the rigor of the Calvinistic creed into the gentler Arminian. He set, too, the example which he taught. He abstained from all profane swearing and vain discourse, and shunned all approach to levity of conversation or behaviour. A week-day in his house wore the sobriety of a Sunday; nor did he fail in performing family worship in a way which enabled his son to give to the world that fine picture of domestic devotion, the "Cottar's Saturday Night." The depressing cares of the world, and a consciousness, perhaps, that he was fighting a losing battle, brought an almost habitual gloom to his brow. He had nothing to cheer him but a sense of having done his duty. The education of his sons he confided to other hands. At first he sent Robert to a small school at Alloway Miln, within a mile of the place of his birth; but the master was removed to a better situation, and his place was supplied by John Murdoch, a candidate for the honors of the church, who undertook, at a moderate salary, to teach the boys of Lochlea, and the children of five other neighbouring farmers, reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, and Latin. He was a young man, a good scholar, and an enthusiastic instructor, with a moderate knowledge of human nature, and a competent share of pedantry. He made himself acceptable to the elder Burness by engaging in conversations on speculative theology, and in lending his

learning to aid the other's sagacity and penetration; and he rendered himself welcome to Robert by bringing him knowledge of any kind—by giving him books—telling him about eminent men—and teaching him the art—which he was not slow in learning—of opening fresh sources of information for himself.

Of the progress which Robert made in knowledge, his teacher has given us a very clear account. In reading, writing, and arithmetic, he excelled all boys of his own age, and took rank above several who were his seniors. The New Testament, the Bible, the English Grammar, and Mason's Collection of Verse and Prose, laid the foundation of devotion and knowledge. As soon as he was capable of understanding composition, Murdoch taught him to turn verse into its natural prose order; sometimes to substitute synonymous expressions for poetical words, and to supply all the ellipses. By these means he perceived when his pupil knew the meaning of his author, and thus sought to instruct him in the proper arrangement of words, as well as variety of expression. For some two years and a half, Robert continued to receive the instructions of his excellent teacher under his father's roof. On Murdoch's nomination to the Grammar School of Ayr, his pupil did not forsake him, but took lodgings with him; and, during the ordinary school hours, walks in the evening, and other moments of leisure, he sought to master the grammar, in order to take upon himself the task of instructing his brothers and sisters at home. Under the same kind instructor he strove to obtain some knowledge of French. "When walking together, and even at meals," says Murdoch, "I was constantly telling him the names of different objects, as they presented themselves, in French, so that he was hourly laying in a stock of words, and sometimes little phrases. In short, he took such pleasure in learning, and I in teaching, that it was difficult to say which of the two was most zealous in the business; and about the end of our second week of study of the French, we began to read a little of the Adventures of Telemachus, in Fenelon's own words." All the French which the young Poet picked up, during one fortnight's course of instruction, could not be much; the

coming of harvest called him to more laborious duties; nor did he, save for a passing hour or so, ever resume his studies in Telemachus.

Of these early and interesting days, during which the future man was seen, like fruit shaping amid the unfolded bloom, we have a picture drawn by the Poet's own hand, and touched off in his own vivid manner.—"At seven years of age I was by no means a favorite with any body. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic idiot piety—I say, idiot piety, because I was then but a child. Though it cost the schoolmaster some thrashings, I made an excellent English scholar; and, by the time I was ten or eleven years of age, I was a critic in substantives, verbs, and particles. The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in, was the Vision of Mirza, and a hymn of Addison's, beginning,

"How are thy servants blest, O Lord!"

I particularly remember one half-stanza, which was music to my ear—

"For though on dreadful whirls we hung,
High on the broken wave."

I met with these in Mason's English collection, one of my school-books. The two first books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two I have read since, were the Life of Hannibal, and the History of the Acts and Deeds of Sir William Wallace. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the floodgates of life shut in eternal rest."

The education of Burns was not over when the school-doors were shut. The peasantry of Scotland turn their cottages into schools; and when a father takes his arm-chair by the evening fire, he seldom neglects to communicate to his children whatever knowledge he possesses himself. Nor is this knowledge very limited; it extends, generally, to the history of Europe, and to the literature of the island; but more particularly to the divinity, the

poetry, and, what may be called, the traditionary history of Scotland. An intelligent peasant is intimate with all those skirmishes, sieges, combats, and quarrels, domestic or national, of which public writers take no account. Genealogies of the chief families are quite familiar to him. He has by heart, too, whole volumes of songs and ballads; nay, long poems sometimes abide in his recollection; nor will he think his knowledge much, unless he knows a little about the lives and actions of the men who have done most honor to Scotland. In addition to what he has on his memory, we may mention what he has on the shelf. A common husbandman is frequently master of a little library: history, divinity, and poetry, but most so the latter, compose his collection. Milton and Young are favorites; the flowery Meditations of Hervey, the religious romance of Pilgrim's Progress, are seldom absent; while of Scottish books, Ramsay, Thomson, Fergusson, and now Burns, together with songs and ballad-books innumerable, are all huddled together, soiled with smoke, and frail and tattered by frequent use. The household of William Burness was an example of what I have described; and there is some truth in the assertion, that in true knowledge the Poet was, at nineteen, a better scholar than nine-tenths of our young gentlemen when they leave school for the college.

Let us look into this a little more closely; nor can we see with a clearer light than what Burns himself has afforded us.—"What I knew of ancient story," he observes, "was gathered from Salmon and Guthrie's Geographical Grammars; and the ideas I had formed of modern manners, of literature and criticism, I got from the Spectator. These, with Pope's works, some plays of Shakspeare, Tull and Dickson on Agriculture, the Heathen Pantheon, Locke on the Human Understanding, Stackhouse's History of the Bible, Justice's British Gardener's Dictionary, Bayle's Lectures, Allan Ramsay's Works, Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin, A Select Collection of English Songs, and Hervey's Meditations, had formed the whole of my reading." But when to these we add Young's Night Thoughts, which his own poems prove him to have admired, we cannot

see that we have advanced far on the way in which he walked, when he disciplined himself for the service of the Scottish muse. In truth, none of the works we have enumerated, save the poems of Allan Ramsay, could be of further use to him than to fill his mind with information, and show him what others had done. The "Address to the Deil," "Highland Mary," and "Tam o'Shanter" are the fruit of far different studies.

Burns had, in truth, a secret school of study, in which he set up other models for imitation than Pope or Hervey.—"In my infant and boyish days," he observes to Doctor Moore, "I owed much to an old woman who resided in the family (Jenny Wilson by name), remarkable for her ignorance, credulity, and superstition. She had, I suppose, the largest collection in the country of tales and songs concerning devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies, witches, warlocks, spunkies, kelpies, elf-candles, dead-lights, wraiths, apparitions, cantraips, giants, enchanted towers, dragons, and other trumpery. This cultivated the latent seeds of poesie; but had so strong an effect upon my imagination that to this hour in my nocturnal rambles I sometimes keep a look-out in suspicious places." Here we have the Poet taking lessons in the classic lore of his native land and profiting largely; yet, to please a scholar like his correspondent, he calls his instructress an ignorant old woman, and her stories idle trumpery. Let the name of Jenny Wilson be reverenced by all lovers of the northern muse; her tales gave color and character to many fine effusions. The supernatural in these legends was corrected and modified by the natural which his growing sense saw in human life, and found in the songs of his native land.—"The collection of songs," he says, "was my *vade-mecum*. I pored over them, driving my cart or walking to labor, song by song, verse by verse, carefully noting the true tender or sublime from affectation and fustian. I am convinced I owe to this practice much of my critic craft, such as it is." The songs of Scotland had, in no remote day, the advantages of the schooling which in these early hours he gave his fancy and understanding.

He had not yet completed these unconscious studies.

In his farther progress his mother was his instructress. Her rectitude of heart, and the fine example of her husband, made an impression too strong to be ever effaced from the mind of her son. This was strengthened by the songs and ballads which she commonly chaunted; they all wore a moral hue. The ballad which she loved most to sing, or her son to hear, is one called "The Life and Age of Man." It is a work of imagination and piety, full of quaintness and nature; it compares the various periods of man's life to the months of the year; and the parallel is both ingenious and poetic.—"I had an old grand-uncle," says Burns, "with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years: the good old man, for such he was, was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry, while my mother would sing the simple old song of 'The Life and Age of Man.'" The mother of the Poet, on being questioned respecting it, some years before her death, repeated the ballad word for word, saying it was one of the many nursery songs of her mother, and that she first heard and learnt it from her seventy years before. The noble poem of "Man was made to Mourn," bears a close resemblance to this old strain, both in language and sentiment. It taught Burns the art, which too few learn, of adding a moral aim to his verse; and though he rose in song to the highest pitch of moral pathos and sublimity, he took his first lesson from this now neglected ballad. In all his letters and memoranda, we see him continually pointing to the rustic productions with which he was in youth familiar, and thus affording us in some measure the means of knowing how little of his excellence is reflected from others, and how much we owe to his own inspiration.

A student in art first studies the works of earlier masters; as he advances, living figures are placed before him, that he may see nature with his own eyes. Burns, who knew nothing of academic rules, pursued a similar course in poetry. He had become acquainted with limb and lineament of the muse, as she had been seen by others: he could learn no more from the dead, and now had recourse to the living: he had hitherto looked on in

silence; it was now time to speak. Beauty first gave utterance to his crowding thoughts; with him love and poetry were coevals. "You know," he says, in his communication to Moore, "our country custom of coupling a man and woman together as partners in the labors of harvest. In my fifteenth autumn, my partner was a bewitching creature, a year younger than myself. My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom, 'she was a bonnie sweet sonsie lass.' In short, she altogether, unwittingly to herself, initiated me in that delicious passion, which, in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and bookworm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! How she caught the contagion I cannot tell. You medical people talk much of infection from breathing the same air, the touch, &c.; but I never expressly said I loved her. Indeed, I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her, when returning in the evening from our labors—why the tones of her voice made my heart-strings thrill like an Eolian harp—and particularly why my pulse beat such a furious ratan when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle stings and thistles. Among her other love-inspiring qualities, she sang sweetly; and it was her favorite reel to which I attempted giving an embodied vehicle in rhyme. I was not so presumptuous as to imagine that I could make verses like printed ones, composed by men who had Greek and Latin; but my girl sung a song which was said to be composed by a country laird's son on one of his father's maids with whom he was in love: and I saw no reason why I might not rhyme as well as he—for, excepting that he could smear sheep and cast peats, his father living in the moorlands, he had no more scholar craft than myself. Thus with me began love and poetry." This intercourse with the softer and gentler part of the creation—this feeling in the presence of youth and loveliness, and desire to give voice to his passion in song—were, to his slumbering emotions, what the voice in Scripture was, among the "dry bones of the valley," calling them into life and

action. It is true that his brother looked upon some of the ladies of these early verses as so many moving broomsticks on which fancy hung her garlands. They seemed otherwise to the Poet. He saw charms in them which prosaic spirits failed to see. We would take the word of the muse in such matters against a whole battalion of men,

> "Who, darkling, grub this earthly hole
> In low pursuit."

Having given, as he said, his "heart a heeze" among those soft companions, the Poet, like the picker of samphire on the beetling cliff, proceeded to seek farther knowledge in a perilous place—*viz.* among the young and the heedless—"the ram-stam squad, who zigzag on," without any settled aim or a wish ungratified. He offended his father, by giving his "manners a brush" at a country dancing-school. The good man had no sincere dislike, as some Calvinists have, to this accomplishment; still he tolerated rather than approved of it; he did not imagine that religion took to the barn-floor,

> "And reel'd, and set, and cross'd, and cleeket;"

cracking her thumbs and distorting, as Milton says, her "clergy climbs," to the sound of a fiddle; dancing, in short, he shook his head at, though he did not frown. The Poet felt, therefore, that in this he had approached at least to disobedience—a circumstance which he regrets in after-life, and regards as the first step from the paths of strictness and sobriety. "The will-o'-wisp meteors of thoughtless whim" began, he says, to be almost the sole lights of his way; yet early-ingrained piety preserved his innocence, though it could not keep him from folly. "The great misfortune of my life," he wisely says, "was to want an aim. The only two openings by which I could enter the temple of fortune was the gate of niggardly economy, or the path of little chicaning bargain-making. The first is so contracted an aperture, I never could squeeze myself into it; the last I always hated—there was contamination in the very entrance. Thus abandoned of aim or view in life, with a strong appetite for sociability, as well from native hilarity as from a

pride of observation and remark—a constitutional melancholy or hypochondriasm that made me fly solitude; add to these incentives to social life my reputation for bookish knowledge, a certain wild logical talent, and a strength of thought something like the rudiments of good sense; and it will not seem surprising that I was generally a welcome guest where I visited; or any great wonder that where two or three met together, there was I among them. Another circumstance in my life, which made some alteration in my mind and manners, was, that I spent my nineteenth summer on a smuggling coast, a good distance from home, at a noted school to learn mensuration, surveying, dialing, &c., in which I made pretty good progress. But I made greater progress in the knowledge of mankind. The contraband trade was at that time very successful, and it sometimes happened to me to fall in with those who carried it on. Scenes of swaggering riot and roaring dissipation were till this time new to me; but I was no enemy to social life. Here, though I learnt to fill my glass and to mix without fear in a drunken squabble, yet I went on with a high hand with my geometry till the sun entered Virgo—a month which is always a carnival in my bosom—when a charming filette, who lived next door to the school, upset my trigonometry, and set me off at a tangent from the sphere of my studies." Nature, in all this, was pursuing her own plan in the education of Burns. The melancholy of which he complains was a portion of his genius; the invisible object to which he was impelled was poetry. No one can fail to perceive, in the scenes which he describes as dear to his heart and fancy, the very materials over which his muse afterwards breathed life and inspiration; and no one can fail to feel, that all this time he had been walking in the path of the muse without knowing it.

He complains that he was unfitted with an aim. He looked around, and saw no outlet for his ambition. Farming he failed to find the same as it is in Virgil—elegance united with toil. The high places of the land were occupied, and no one could hope to ascend save the titled or the wealthy. The church he could not reach without

an expensive education, or patronage less attainable still. Law held out temptation to talent, but not to talent without money, while the army opened its glittering files to him who could purchase a commission, or had, in the words of the divine,

"A beauteous sister or convenient wife,"

to smooth the way to preferment. With a consciousness of genius, and a desire of distinction, he stood motionless, like a stranded vessel whose sails are still set, her colors flying, and the mariners aboard. He had now and then a sort of vague intimation from his own heart that he was a poet; but the polished and stately versification of English poetry alarmed and dismayed him: he had sung to himself a song or two, and stood with his hand on the plough and his heart with the muse. The strength which he could not himself discover was not likely to be found out by others. It is thus we find him spoken of by his good old kind preceptor:—"Gilbert," says Murdoch, "always appeared to me to possess a more lively imagination, and to be more of the wit than Robert. I attempted to teach them a little church-music. Robert's ear, in particular, was remarkably dull, and his voice untuneable. It was long before I could get him to distinguish one tune from another. Robert's countenance was generally grave, and expressive of a serious, contemplative, and thoughtful mind. Gilbert's face said—

"Mirth, with thee I mean to live;"

and, certainly, if any person who knew the two boys had been asked which of them was most likely to court the muses, he would surely never have guessed that Robert had a propensity of that kind." The simple schoolmaster had perhaps paid court to some small heritor's daughter, and dressed his face in smiles for the task; he accordingly thought that the Muse was to be wooed and won in the same Malvolio way, and never imagined that the face inspired with contemplation and melancholy could be dear to her heart.

While the boy was thus rising into the man, and the mind was expanding with the body, both were in danger of being crushed, as the daisy was, in the Poet's own im-

mortal strains, beneath the weight of the furrow. The whole life of his father was a continued contest with fortune. Burns saw, as he grew up, to what those days of labor and nights of anxiety would lead, and set himself, with heart and hand, to lighten the one and alleviate the other. At the plough, scythe, and reaping-hook he feared no competitor, and so set all fears of want in his own person at defiance: he felt but for his father. All this is touchingly described by Gilbert. "My brother, at the age of thirteen, assisted in thrashing the crop of corn, and, at fifteen, was the principal laborer on the farm; for we had no hired servant, male or female. The anguish of mind we felt, at our tender years, under these straits and difficulties, was very great. To think of our father growing old—for he was now above fifty, broken down with the long-continued fatigues of his life, with a wife and five other children, and in a declining state of circumstances—these reflections produced in my brother's mind and mine sensations of the deepest distress. At this time he was almost constantly afflicted in the evenings with a dull head-ache, which, at a future period of his life, was exchanged for a palpitation of the heart, and a threatening of fainting and suffocation in his bed in the night-time." The elder Burness, while in the Lothians, had paid attention to gardening; but he could not bring much agricultural knowledge from his native country. His toil was incessant; but it was of the body, not of the brain. More is required in farming than mere animal vigor and dexterity of hand. A skilful farmer may be called a learned man;—to work according to the season, and in the spirit of the soil; to anticipate sunshine, and be prepared for storms; to calculate chances and consequences; suit demands at home, and fit markets abroad, require what not many fully possess.

I know not how much of this knowledge William Burness possessed. He was, however, fertile in expedients: when he found that his farm was unproductive in corn, he thought the soil suitable for flax, and resolved himself to raise the commodity, while to the Poet he allotted the task of manufacturing it for the market. To accomplish this, it was necessary that he should be instructed in flax-

dressing: accordingly, at Midsummer, 1781, Robert went to Irvine, where he wrought under the eye of one Peacock, kinsman to his mother. His mode of life was frugal enough. "He possessed," says Currie, "a single room for his lodging, rented, perhaps, at the rate of a shilling a week. He passed his days in constant labor as a flax-dresser, and his food consisted chiefly of oatmeal sent to him from his father's family." A picture of his situation and feelings is luckily preserved of his own drawing: the simplicity of the expression, and pure English of the style, are not its highest qualities. He thus wrote to his father: "Honored Sir:—I have purposely delayed writing, in the hope that I should have the pleasure of seeing you on New-year's day: but work comes so hard upon us that I do not choose to be absent on that account. My health is nearly the same as when you were here, only my sleep is a little sounder, and on the whole I am rather better than otherwise, though I mend by very slow degrees. The weakness of my nerves has so debilitated my mind that I dare neither review past wants, nor look forward into futurity: for the least anxiety or perturbation in my breast produces most unhappy effects on my whole frame. Sometimes, indeed, when for an hour or two my spirits are a little lightened, I *glimmer* a little into futurity; but my principal, and indeed my only pleasurable employment is looking backwards and forwards in a moral and religious way. I am quite transported at the thought that ere long, perhaps very soon, I shall bid an eternal adieu to all the pains, and uneasinesses, and disquietudes of this weary life; for I assure you I am heartily tired of it: and, if I do not very much deceive myself, I could contentedly and gladly resign it.

"As for this world," he continues, "I despair of ever making a figure in it. I am not formed for the bustle of the busy, nor the flutter of the gay. I shall never again be capable of entering into such scenes. Indeed, I am altogether unconcerned at the thoughts of this life. I foresee that poverty and obscurity probably await me, and I am in some measure prepared, and daily preparing, to meet them. I have but just time and paper to return you my grateful thanks for the lessons of virtue and piety

you have given me, which were too much neglected at the time of giving them, but which I hope have been remembered ere it is yet too late." This letter is dated December 27, 1781. No one can mistake the cause of his melancholy: obscure toil and an undistinguished lot on earth, directed his thoughts in despair to another world, where the righteous "shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." To plough, and sow, and reap were poetic labors, compared to the dusty toil of a flax-dresser: with the lark for his companion, and the green fields around him, his spirits rose, and he looked on himself as forming a part of creation: but when he sat down to the brake and the hackle, his spirits sank, and his dreams of ambition vanished.

Flax-dressing, in the poet's estimation, seemed any thing but the way to wealth and fame: the desponding tone of his letter was no good augury; the catastrophe of the business is not quite in keeping with quotations from Scripture and hopes in heaven. "Partly through whim," said the bard to Moore, "and partly that I wished to set about doing something in life, I joined a flax-dresser in Irvine to learn his trade. This was an unlucky affair: as we were giving a welcome carousal to the new year, the shop took fire and burnt to ashes, and I was left like a true poet, not worth a sixpence." This disaster was followed by one much more grievous. "The clouds of misfortune," says Burns, "were gathering fast round my father's head. After three years' tossing and whirling in the vortex of litigation, he was just saved from the horrors of a jail by a consumption, which after two years' promises, kindly stept in and carried him away to where the 'wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.' His all went among the hell-hounds that prowl in the kennel of justice. The finishing evil that brought up the rear of this infernal file was my constitutional melancholy being increased to such a degree, that for three months I was in a state of mind scarcely to be envied by the hopeless wretches who have got their mittimus—'Depart from me, ye accursed!'" The intelligence, rectitude, and piety of William Burness were an honor to the class to

which he belonged: his eminent son acknowledged, when his own intercourse with the world entitled his opinions to respect, that he had met with few who understood men, their manners and their ways, equal to his father: "but stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility," he added, "are disqualifying circumstances in the paths of fortune."

Robert and his brother were afflicted, but did not despair; they collected together the little property which law and misfortune had spared, and, in the year 1784, took the farm of Mossgiel, near Mauchline, consisting of 118 acres, at an annual rent of ninety pounds. Their mother superintended the dairy and the household, while the Poet and Gilbert undertook for the rest. "It was," observes the latter, "a joint concern among us: every member of the family was allowed wages for the labor performed; my brother's allowance and mine was seven pounds per annum, and his expenses never in any year exceeded his slender income. His temperance and frugality were every thing that could be wished." It is pleasing to contemplate a picture such as this.

We are now about to enter into the regions of romance. "I began," says Burns, "to be known in the neighbourhood as a maker of rhymes." The course of his life hitherto has shown that his true vocation was neither the plough nor the hackle. He acquired, indeed, the common knowledge of a husbandman; but that was all he knew or cared to know of the matter. "Farmer Attention," says the proverb, "is a good farmer all the world over;" and Burns was attentive as far as ploughing, sowing, harrowing, reaping, stacking, thrashing, winnowing, and selling went; he did all this by a sort of mechanical impulse, but success in farming demands more. The farmer should know what is doing in his way in the world around; he must learn to anticipate demand, and, in short, to *time* every thing. But he who pens an ode on his sheep when he should be driving them forth to pasture—who stops his plough in the half-drawn furrow, to rhyme about the flowers which he buries—who sees visions on his way from market, and makes rhymes on them—who writes an ode on the horse he is about to yoke, and a ballad on the

girl, who shows the whitest hands and brightest eyes among his reapers—has no chance of ever growing opulent, or of purchasing the field on which he toils. The bard amidst his ripening corn, or walking through his fields of grass and clover, beholds on all sides images of pathos or of beauty, connects them with moral influences, and lifts himself to heaven: a grosser mortal sees only so many acres of promising corn or fattening grass, connects them with rising markets and increasing gain, and, instead of rising, descends into "Mammon's filthy delve." That poetic feelings and fancies such as these passed frequently over the mind of Burns in his early days, we have his own assurance; while labor held his body, poetry seized his spirit, and, unconsciously to himself, asserted her right and triumphed in her victory.

Some obey the call of learning and become poets, others fall, they know not how, into the company of the muse, and break out into numbers. Love was the voice which called up the poet in Burns; his Parnassus was the stubble-field, and his inspirer that fair-haired girl from whose hands he picked the thistle-strings, and delighted to walk with when but some fifteen years old. The song which he made in her praise he noted down in a little book, entitled "Observations, Hints, Songs, Scraps of Poetry, by Robert Burness; a man who had little art in making money, and still less in keeping it." "I composed the song," he said, "long afterwards, in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and I never recollect it but my heart melts and my blood sallies." The passion which he felt failed to find its way into the verse; there is some nature, but no inspiration:—

"My Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,
And what is best of a'—
Her reputation is complete,
And fair without a flaw.
She dresses ay sae clean and neat,
Both decent and genteel;
And then there's something in her gait
Gars ony dress look weel."

These lines give little indication of future strength; his vigor of thought increased with his stature; before he was a year older, the language of his muse was more manly and bold:—

"I dreamed I lay where flowers were springing,
Gaily in the sunny beam,
Listening to the wild birds singing
By a falling crystal stream;
Straight the sky grew black and daring,
Thro' the woods the whirlwinds rave,
Trees, with aged arms, are warring,
O'er the swelling drumlie wave."

Few of the early verses of Burns are preserved; some he himself destroyed, others were composed, but not, perhaps, committed to paper; while it is likely that not a few are entirely lost. In his nineteenth summer, the leisure season of the farmer, while studying mensuration at a school on the sea-coast, he met with the Peggy of one of his earliest songs. "Stepping into the garden," he says, "one charming noon to take the sun's altitude, there I met my angel—

"Like Proserpine gathering flowers,
Herself a fairer flower."

It was in vain to think of doing any more good at school. The remaining week I staid, I did nothing but craze the faculties of my soul about her, or steal out to meet her; and the two last nights of my stay in the country, had sleep been a mortal sin, the image of this modest and innocent girl had kept me guiltless." On his return home the harvest was commenced. To the fair lass of Kirkoswald he dedicated the first fruits of his fancy, in a strain of equal freedom and respect, beginning—

"Now wastlin' winds and slaught'ring guns
Bring autumn's pleasant weather;
The moorcock springs on whirring wings
Amang the blooming heather;
Now waving grain wide o'er the plain
Delights the weary farmer,
And the moon shines bright when I rove at night
To muse upon my charmer."

In a still richer strain he celebrates his nocturnal adventures with another of the fair ones of the west. Burns could now write as readily as he could speak, and pour the passion which kindled up his veins into his compositions. It is thus he sings of Annie—

"I hae been blythe wi' comrades dear,
I hae been merry drinkin';

I hae been joyfu' gatherin' gear,
I hae been happy thinkin';
But a' the pleasures e'er I saw,
Tho' three times doubled fairly,
That happy night was worth them a'
Amang the rigs o' barley."

He who could write such lines as these had little to learn from the muse; and yet he soon surpassed them in liquid ease of expression and happy originality of sentiment. It is one of the delusions of his biographers, that the sources of his inspiration are to be sought in English poetry; but, save an image from Young, and a word or so from Shakspeare, there is no trace of them in all his compositions. Burns read the English poets no doubt with wonder and delight: but he felt he was not of their school; the language of life with him was wholly different; the English language is, to a Scottish peasant, much the same as a foreign tongue; it was not without reason that Murray, the oriental scholar, declared that the English of Milton was less easy to learn than the Latin of Virgil. Any one conversant with our northern lyrics will know what school of verse Burns imitated when he sang of Nannie—a lass who dwelt on the banks of the Lugar:—

"Behind yon hills where Lugar flows,
'Mang moors an' mosses many, O;
The wintry sun the day has closed
And I'll awa' to Nannie, O.

"Her face is fair, her heart is true,
As spotless as she's bonnie, O;
The opening gowan, wat wi' dew,
Nae purer is than Nannie, O."

Such was the language in which the Poet addressed the rustic damsels of Kyle; ladies are not very apt to be won by verse, let it be ever so elegant; they set down the person who adorns them with the lilies and the roses of imagination as a dreamer, and look around for more substantial comfort. Waller's praise made Sacharissa smile —and smile only; and another lady of equal beauty saw in Lord Byron a pale-faced lad, lame of a foot, and married a man who could leap a five-barred gate; yet Burns was, or imagined himself, beloved; he wrote from his own immediate emotions; his muse was no visionary dweller by an imaginary fountain, but a substantial

"Fresh young landart lass,"

whose charms had touched his fancy. Nor was he one of those who look high and muse on dames nursed in velvet laps, and fed with golden spoons. "He had always," says Gilbert, "a particular jealousy of people who were richer than himself; his love, therefore, rarely settled on persons of this description. When he selected any one out of the sovereignty of his good pleasure to whom he should pay his particular attention, she was instantly invested with a sufficient stock of charms out of the plentiful stores of his own imagination; and there was often a great dissimilitude between his fair captivator as she appeared to others, and as she seemed when invested with the attributes he gave her." His own words partly confirm the account of Gilbert. "My heart was completely tinder, and was eternally lighted up by some goddess or other; and, as in every other warfare of this world, my fortune was various, sometimes I was received with favor, and sometimes mortified with repulse." That his love was sometimes repulsed, we have the assurance of a poem, now lost, in which, like Cowley, he had recorded his labors in the way of affection; when doors were closed against him, or the Annie or Nannie of the hour failed in their promises, he added another verse to the ballad, the o'erword of which was, "So I'll to my Latin again." If he sought consolation in studying the Latin rudiments when jilted, his disappointments in that way could not be many, for his knowledge of the language was small. In his twenty-fourth year his skill in verse enabled him to add the crowning-glory to his lyric compositions; who the lady was that inspired it we are not told, but she must have been more than commonly beautiful, or more than usually kind: as the concluding compliment might have been too much for one, he has wisely bestowed it on the whole sex; the praise of other poets fades away before it:—

"There's nought but care on every han',
In every hour that passes, O!
What signifies the life o' man
An' 'twere na for the lasses, O!

"Auld nature swears the lovely dears
Her noblest work she classes, O!

Her 'prentice han' she tried on man,
An' then she made the lasses, O!"

The progress which Burns made in the more serious kind of verse during this lyrical fit was not at all so brilliant; his attempts have more of the language of poetry than of its simple force and true dignity. There are passages, indeed, of great truth and vigor, but no continued strain either to rival his after flights, or compare with the unity and finished excellence of "My Nannie, O," and "Green grow the Rashes." He had prepared himself, however, for those more prolonged efforts; nature had endowed him with fine sensibility of heart and grandeur of soul; he had made himself familiar with nature, animate and inanimate; with the gentleness of spring, the beauty of summer, the magnificence of autumn, and the stormy sublimity of winter; nor was he less so with rural man, and his passions and pursuits. Though indulging in no sustained flights he had now and then sudden bursts in which his feelings over-mastered all restraint. The following stanza, written in his twenty-fourth year, shows he had read Young, and felt the resemblance which the season of winter bore to his own clouded fortunes:—

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,
The joyless winter day,
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May;
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine."

"There is scarcely any earthly object," says Burns, "gives me more—I do not know that I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me, something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood or a high plantation, in a cloudy winter day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees, and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion: my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.'" In another mood he wrote what he called "a wild rhapsody, miserably deficient

in versification, but full of the sentiment of my heart." This ditty wants harmony and vivid force of expression: but it breathes of the old ballad:—

"My father was a farmer,
Upon the Carrick border,
And carefully he bred me up
In decency and order:
He bade me act a manly part,
Though I had ne'er a farthing,
For without an honest manly heart
No man was worth regarding."

In one of his desponding fits, when he "looked back on prospects drear," or beheld the future darkening, he wrote that Prayer in which some have seen nothing but sentiments of contrition and submissiveness, and others a desire to lay on the Creator the blame of the follies with which he charges himself. I have heard his enemies quote the following verse with an air of triumph:—

"Thou knowest that Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong,
And, listening to their witching voice,
Has often led me wrong."

Poetry had now become with Burns a darling pursuit: he had no settled plan of study, for he composed at the plough, at the harrow, and with the reaping-hook in his hand, and usually had half-a-dozen or more poems in progress, taking them up as the momentary tone of his mind suited the sentiment of the verse, and laying them down as he grew careless or became fatigued. None of the verses of those days are in existence, save the "Death of Poor Mailie," a performance remarkable for genuine simplicity of expression; and "John Barleycorn," a clever imitation of the old ballads of that name, a favorite subject with the minstrels of Caledonia. His mode of composition was singular: when he hit off a happy verse in a random fit of inspiration, he sought for a subject suitable to its tone of language and feeling, and then completed the poem. This shows a mind full of the elements of poetry. "My passions," he said, "when once lighted up, raged like so many devils till they got vent in rhyme, and then the conning over my verses, like a spell soothed all into quiet."

When Burns succeeded in evoking the demon of passion by the spell of verse, he had leisure, or at least peace, for a time; but he could not be idle: he turned his attention to prose. His boyish feelings had been touched, he tells us, on reading the vision of Mirza, and many passages in the Bible; he had read too with attention a collection of letters by the wits of Queen Anne's reign. This improved his taste; and as he grew up, and correspondence was forced upon him by business or by friendship, he was pleased to see that he could express himself with fluency and ease. He thought so well of those performances that he made copies of them, and, in moments of leisure or vanity sought and found satisfaction in comparing them with the compositions of his companions. He observed, he said, his own superiority. Nay, he says he carried the whim so far, that though he had not three farthing's worth of business in the world, yet almost every post brought him as many letters as if he had been a plodding son of the day-book and ledger. He now extended his reading to the Spectator, the Man of Feeling, Tristram Shandy, Count Fathom, and Pamela: he studied as well as read them, and endeavoured to form a prose style uniting strength and purity. There are passages of genuine ease and unaffected simplicity in his early as well as his later letters; yet there is too much of a premeditated air, and a too obvious desire of showing what fine, bold, vigorous things he could say. No one, however, can peruse his prose of those days without wonder; it shows a natural vigor of mind and a talent for observation: there are out-flashings, too, of a fiery impetuosity of spirit worthy of a genius the most cultivated as well as the most lofty, and passages of great elegance and feeling.

In his common-place book, his rhymes are accompanied with explanations in prose, and, as he commenced these insertions in April, 1783, he has afforded us the means of measuring the extent of his acquirements in early life. He seemed not unconscious that he could say something worth the world's attention.—"As he was but little indebted," he said, "to scholastic education, and bred at a plough-tail, his performances must be strongly tinctured with his unpolished rustic way of life; but it

may be some entertainment to a curious observer of human nature, to see how a ploughman thinks and feels under the pressure of love, ambition, anxiety, grief, with the like cares and passions, which, however diversified by the modes and manners of life, operate pretty much alike on all the species."

In these compositions we may continually trace thoughts and images, which growing taste and increasing vigor enabled him afterwards to beautify and expand. The following passage suggested the fine stanza on happy love in the "Cottar's Saturday Night:"—"Notwithstanding all that has been said against love, respecting the folly and wickedness it leads a young inexperienced mind into, still I think it in a great measure deserves the highest encomiums that have been passed upon it. If any thing on earth deserves the name of rapture or transport, it is the feelings of green eighteen, in the company of the mistress of his heart, when she repays him with an equal return of affection."

In the same strain he traces, elsewhere, the connexion between love, music, and poetry, and points out, as a fine touch in nature, that passage in a modern love composition—

> "As toward her cot he jogged along,
> Her name was frequent in his song."

"For my own part," he observes, "I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I once got heartily in love, and then rhyme and song were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart." No one has accounted more happily for the passionate eloquence of his songs than he has done himself.

That he extended his views, and desired, after having sung of the maidens of Carrick and Kyle, to celebrate their streams and hills, and statesmen and heroes, we have evidence enough in other parts of his works.—"I am hurt," he thus writes, August, 1785, "to see the other towns, rivers, woods, haughs, &c. of Scotland immortalized in song, while my dear native country, the ancient bailieries of Carrick, Kyle, and Cunningham, famous both in ancient and modern times, for a gallant and warlike race of inhabitants—a country where civil and

particularly religious liberty, have ever found their first support and their last asylum—a country, the birth-place of many famous philosophers, soldiers, and statesmen, and the scene of many important events recorded in history, particularly a great many of the actions of the glorious Wallace—yet we have never had one Scotch poet of any eminence to make the fertile banks of Irvine, the romantic woodlands and sequestered scenes on Ayr, and the heathy, mountainous source and winding sweep of the Doon, emulate Tay, Forth, Ettrick, and Tweed. This is a complaint I would gladly remedy; but, alas! I am far unequal to the task both in genius and education." No one ever remedied an evil of this kind with such decision and effect. The Ayr, the Doon, the Irvine, and the Lugar are now flowing in light, nor have their heroes and their patriots been forgotten.

In another passage he acquaints us with the models his muse set up for imitation; the date is September, 1785.—"There is a noble sublimity, a heart-melting tenderness, in some of our ancient ballads, which show them to be the work of a masterly hand, and it has often given me many a heart-ache to reflect that such glorious old bards—bards who very probably owed all their talent to native genius, yet have described the exploits of heroes, the pangs of disappointment, and the meltings of love with such fine strokes of nature, that their very names—O, how mortifying to a bard's vanity!—are now 'buried among the wreck of things which were.' O, ye illustrious names unknown! who could feel so strongly and describe so well, the last, the meanest of the muses' train—one who, though far inferior to your flights, yet eyes your path, and, with trembling wing, would sometimes soar after you; a poor rustic bard unknown pays this sympathetic pang to your memory. Some of you tell us, with all the charms of verse, that you have been unfortunate in the world, unfortunate in love: *he*, too, has felt the loss of his little fortune, the loss of friends, and, worse than all, the loss of the woman he loved. Like you, all his consolation was his muse; she taught him in rustic measures to complain: happy could he have done it with your strength of imagination and flow of verse! May the

turf lie lightly on your bones, and may you now enjoy that solace and rest which the world rarely gives to the heart tuned to all the feelings of poesie and love!"—Much of the man and the poet is visible in this remarkable passage; it prepares us for his approaching sun-burst of poetry, which lightened more than Carrick and Kyle.

Those who imagine Burns to have been only a rhyming, raving youth, who sauntered on the banks of streams, in lonely glens, and by castles gray, musing on the moon, and woman, and other inconstant things, do him injustice; a letter in 1783 to his cousin James Burness, writer in Montrose, shows something of the world around him. —"This country till of late was flourishing incredibly in the manufacture of silk, lawn, and carpet weaving; and we are still carrying on a good deal in that way, but much reduced from what it was. We had also a fine trade in the shoe way, but now entirely ruined, and hundreds driven to a starving condition on account of it. Farming is also at a very low ebb with us. Our lands, generally speaking, are mountainous and barren; and our landholders, full of ideas of farming gathered from England and the Lothians, and other rich soils in Scotland, make no allowance for the odds in the quality of land, and consequently stretch as much beyond what in the event we will be found able to pay. We are also much at a loss for want of proper methods in our improvements of farming. Necessity compels us to leave our old schemes, and few of us have opportunities of being well informed on new ones. In short, my dear Sir, since the unfortunate beginning of this American war, and its still more unfortunate conclusion, this country has been, and still is, decaying very fast." Here the poet is sunk, and the observing farmer rises: in the same letter he touches on a theme which had its influence on his own character and habits —at least he imagined so.

"There is a great trade of smuggling carried on along our coasts, which, however destructive to the interests of the kingdom at large, certainly enriches this corner of it, but too often at the expense of our morals. However, it enables individuals to make, at least for a time, a splendid appearance; but fortune, as is usual with her

when she is uncommonly lavish of her favors, is generally even with them at the last; and happy were it for numbers of them if she would leave them no worse than when she found them." At the period to which this refers, many farmers on the sea-coast were engaged in the contraband trade: their horses and servants were frequently employed in disposing, before the dawn, of importations made during the cloud of night; and though Burns, perhaps, took no part in the traffic, he associated with those who carried it on, and seemed to think that insight into new ways of life and human character more than recompensed him for the risk he ran. It is dangerous for a bare hand to pluck a lily from among nettles; men of few virtues and many follies are unsafe companions.

"I have often observed," he says, "in the course of my experience of human life, that every man, even the worst, has something good about him, though very often nothing else than a happy temperament of constitution inclining him to this or that virtue. For this reason no man can say in what degree any other person besides himself can be with strict justice called wicked. Let any of the strictest character for regularity of conduct among us examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity; and how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation. I say, any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes, of mankind around him with a brother's eye. I have often courted the acquaintance of that part of mankind commonly known by the ordinary phrase of blackguards, sometimes further than was consistent with the safety of my character. Those who, by thoughtless prodigality or headstrong passions, have been driven to ruin, though disgraced by follies, I have yet found among them, in not a few instances, some of the noblest virtues, magnanimity, generosity, disinterested friendship, and even modesty." All this is true; but men of evil deeds are not, till they have purified themselves, fit companions for the young and the inflammatory. There is no human being so depraved as to be without something which con-

nects him with the sympathies of life. Dirk Hatteraick, before he hung himself, made out a balanced account to his owners, showing that, though he had cut throats and drowned bantlings as a smuggler, he could reckon with the house of Middleburgh for every stiver. It is more pleasing to perceive, in the Poet's early prose, sentiments similar to those which he afterwards more poetically expressed in his "Address to the Rigidly Righteous."

> "Then gently scan your brother man,
> Still, gentler sister woman;
> Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
> To step aside is human.
> One point must still be greatly dark,
> The reason *why* they do it;
> And just as lamely can ye mark
> How far, perhaps, they rue it."

The people of Kyle were slow in appreciating this philosophy. When they saw him hand-and-glove with roving smugglers, or sitting with loose comrades, who scorned the decencies of life, or looking seriously at a horde of gypsies huddled together in a kiln, or musing among "randie, gangrel bodies" in Posie Nancies, they could not know that like a painter he was studying character, and making sketches for future pictures of life and manners: they saw nothing but danger to himself from such society. And here lies the secret of the complaint he has recorded against the world in his twenty-fourth year. "I don't well know what is the reason of it, but, somehow or other, though I am pretty generally beloved, yet I never could find the art of commanding respect. I imagine it is owing to my being deficient in what Sterne calls the understrapping virtue of discretion." No doubt of it. The sober and sedate saw that he respected not himself; they loved him for his manliness of character, and eloquence, and independence; but they grieved for a weakness out of which they could not see that strength and moral beauty would come.

The glory of his poetry was purchased at a price too dear for himself. "In Irvine," says Gilbert, "he had contracted some acquaintance of a freer manner of thinking, whose society prepared him for overleaping the

bounds of rigid virtue, which had hitherto restrained him."—"The principal thing which gave my mind a turn," says Burns to Dr. Moore, "was a friendship I formed with a young fellow, a very noble character, but a hapless child of misfortune. He was the son of a simple mechanic; but a great man, taking him under his patronage, gave him a genteel education, with a view of bettering his situation in life. The patron dying just as he was ready to launch out into the world, he went to sea in despair. His mind was fraught with independence, magnanimity, and every manly virtue. I loved and admired him to a degree of enthusiasm, and, of course, strove to imitate him: in some measure I succeeded. I had pride before; but he taught it to flow in proper channels. His knowledge of the world was vastly superior to mine, and I was all attention to learn. He was the only man I ever saw who was a greater fool than myself where woman was the presiding star; but he spoke of illicit love with the levity of a sailor, which hitherto I had regarded with horror. Here his friendship did me a mischief." The person to whom this refers, has survived the storms which threatened shipwreck to his youth, and lives respected. When spoken to on the subject, he exclaimed, "Illicit love! levity of a sailor! The Poet had nothing to learn that way when I saw him first."

That Burns talked and thought too freely and indiscreetly in his early years, we have evidence in verse. In his memorandum-book there are entries which, amid all their spirit and graphic beauty, contain levities of expression which may be tolerated when the wine is flowing and the table in a roar, but which look not so becoming on the sober page which reflection has sanctioned. In May, 1785, he wrote the lively chaunt called "Robin," in which he gives an account of his birth.

"There was a lad was born in Kyle,
But whatna day o' whatna style
I doubt its hardly worth our while
To be so nice wi' Robin.

"The gossip keekit in his loof,
Quo' she wha lives will see the proof
This waly boy will be nae coof—
I think we'll ca' him Robin.

"But sure as three times three make nine,
I see, by ilka score and line,
This chap will dearly love our kin',
So leeze me on thee, Robin."

In these lines he approaches the border-land between modesty and impropriety—we must quote no farther, nor seek to show the Poet in still merrier moods. Burns, in all respects, arose from the people: he worked his way out of the darkness, drudgery, and vulgarities of rustic life, and, in spite of poverty, pain, and disappointment, emerged into the light of heaven. He was surrounded by coarse and boisterous companions, who were fit for admiring the ruder sallies of his wit, but incapable of understanding those touches of moral pathos and exquisite sensibility with which his sharpest things are accompanied. They perceived but the thorns of the rose—they felt not its fine odor. The spirit of poesie led him, in much peril, through the prosaic wilderness around, and prepared him for asserting his right to one of the highest places in the land of song.

As the elder Burness was now dead, the Poet had to exercise his own judgment in the affairs of Mossgiel: at first all seemed to prosper.—"I had entered," he says, "upon this farm with a full resolution—'Come, go to, I will be wise;' I read farming books; I calculated crops; I attended markets; and, in short, in spite of the devil, the world and the flesh, I believe I should have been a wise man; but the first year, from unfortunately buying bad seed, the second from a late harvest, we lost half our crops. This overset all my wisdom, and I returned, 'like the dog to his vomit, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.'"—"The farm of Mossgiel," says Gilbert, "lies very high, and mostly on a cold, wet bottom. The first four years that we were on the farm were very frosty, and the spring was very late. Our crops, in consequence, were very unprofitable, and notwithstanding our utmost diligence and economy, we found ourselves obliged to give up our bargain, with the loss of a considerable portion of our original stock." The judgment could not be great which selected a farm that lay high, on a cold, wet bottom, and purchased bad

seed corn. That Burns put his hand to the plough and labored incessantly, there can be no doubt—but an unsettled head gives the hands much to do · when he put pen to paper, all thoughts of crops and cattle vanished; he only noted down ends of verse and fragments of song: his copy of Small's Treatise on Ploughs is now before me; not one remark appears on the margins; but on the title-page is written, "Robert Burns, Poet." He had now decided on his vocation.

This study of song, love of reading, wanderings in woods, nocturnal excursions in matters of love and choice of companions, who had seen much and had much to tell, was, unconsciously to himself, forcing Burns upon the regions of poesie. To these may be added the establishment of a club, in which subjects of a moral or domestic nature were discussed. The Tarbolton club consisted of some half-dozen young lads, sons of farmers; the Poet who planned it was the ruling star; the place of meeting was a small public-house in the village; the sum expended by each was not to exceed three-pence, and, with the humble cheer which this could bring, they were, when the debate was concluded, to toast their lasses and the continuance of friendship. Here he found a vent for his own notions, and as the club met regularly and continued for years, he disciplined himself into something of a debater, and acquired a readiness and fluency of language; he was never at a loss for thoughts.

Burns drew up the regulations.—"As the great end of human society," says the exordium, "is to become wiser and better, this ought, therefore, to be the principal view of every man in every station of life. But as experience has taught us, that such studies as inform the head and mend the heart, when long continued, are apt to exhaust the faculties of the mind, it has been found proper to relieve and unbend the mind by some employment or another that may be agreeable enough to keep its powers in exercise, but, at the same time, not so serious as to exhaust them. But, superadded to this, by far the greater part of mankind are under the necessity of earning the sustenance of human life by the labor of their bodies, whereby not only the faculties of the mind, but the

sinews and nerves of the body, are so fatigued that it is absolutely necessary to have recourse to some amusement or diversion, to relieve the wearied man worn down with the necessary labors of life." The first meeting was held on Halloween, in the year 1780. Burns was president, and the question of debate was, "Suppose a young man, bred a farmer, but without any fortune, has it in his power to marry either of two women, the one a girl of large fortune, but neither handsome in person nor agreeable in conversation, but who can manage the household affairs of a farm well enough; the other of them, a girl every way agreeable in person, conversation, and behaviour, but without any fortune: which of them shall he choose?" Other questions of a similar tendency were discussed, and many matters regarding domestic duties and social obligations were considered. This rustic institution united the means of instruction with happiness; but, on the removal of the poet from Lochlea, it lost the spirit which gave it life, and dissensions arising, the club was scattered, and the records, much of them in Burns' hand-writing, destroyed.

No sooner was the Poet settled at Mossgiel, than he was requested to aid in forming a similar club in Mauchline. The regulations of the Tarbolton institution suggested those of the other; but the fines for non-attendance, instead of being spent in drink, were laid out in the purchase of books; the first work thus obtained was the Mirror, the second the Lounger, and the time was not distant when the founder's genius was to supply them with a work not destined soon to die. This society subscribed for the first edition of the poems of its celebrated associate. The members were originally country lads, chiefly sons of husbandmen—a description of persons, in the opinion of Burns, more agreeable in their manners, and more desirous of improvement, than the smart, self-conceited mechanics of towns, who were ready to wrangle and dispute on all topics, and whose vanity would never allow that they were confuted.

One of the biographers of Burns has raised what the Poet calls "a philosophic reek" on the propriety of refining the minds of hinds and farmers by means of works of

elegance and delicacy; without believing, with Currie, that if not a positive evil it is a doubtful blessing, we may question whether more than a dozen out of ten thousand hinds and mechanics would feel inconvenience from increased delicacy of taste. On a vast number such lessons would be utterly lost, for no polish can convert a common pebble into a diamond; while from the minds of many it would remove the weeds with the same discriminating hand that the Poet cleared his riggs of corn, and "spared the symbol dear," the Scottish thistle. In truth, the danger which Currie dreaded has been encountered and overcome; more than all the works he enumerated as forming the reading of Burns are to be found in the hands of the peasantry of Scotland. Milton, Thomson, Young, poets of the highest order and of polished elegance, are as well known to the peasantry as the Bible is; yet no one has complained that a furrow more or less has been drawn in consequence, that our shepherds smear their sheep with too delicate a finger, and that our rustics are oppressed by fastidious nicety of taste.

It would have been better for the Poet if he had maintained that purity in himself, which, in the regulations of his clubs, he desired to see in others. The consequences of keeping company with the free and the joyous were now to be manifested. Soon after his father's death one of his mother's maids, in person not at all attractive, produced his

"Sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess."

and furnished him with the opportunity of standing as a sinner on the stool of repentance, and commemorating the event in rhymes, licentious as well as humorous. He had already sung of his own birth in a free and witty way, and he now put a song into the mouth of the partner of his folly, in which she cries, with rather more of levity than sorrow—

"Wha will own he did the faut,
Wha will buy my groanin-maut,
Wha will tell me how to ca't?
The rantin' dog, the daddie o't.

"When I mount the creepie chair,
Wha will sit beside me there?
Gie me Rob, I ask nae mair,
The rantin' dog, the daddie o't."

Nor can any one applaud the taste of "Rob the Rhymer's Address to his Illegitimate Child;" he glories in a fault which, he imagines, perplexed the church; for he sought not to conceal from himself that both the minister and elders were all but afraid of meddling with a delinquent who could make the country merry at their expense. In a third poem he gives a ludicrous account of his appearance before the session, and of the admonition he received. Instead of promising amendment, he draws consolation from Scripture with equal audacity and wit:—

"King David, of poetic brief,
Wrought 'mang the lasses such mischief
As filled his after life with grief,
And bloody rants,
And yet he's ranked 'mang the chief
Of lang syne saunts.
"And maybe, Tam, for a' my cants,
My wicked rhymes, and drunken rants,
I'll give auld Cloven-Clootie's haunts
An unco slip yet,
And snugly sit amang the saunts
At David's hip yet."

It is painful to touch, even with a gentle hand, on the moral sores of so fine a genius, but his character cannot be understood otherwise: almost any other erring youth would have resigned himself, without resistance, to the discipline of the kirk, and bowed to its rebuke: Burns was not to be so tamed—stricken, he struck again, and, instead of courting silence and seclusion, sung a new song, and walked out into the open sunshine of remark and observation. I cannot set this regardlessness down to growing hardness within, or to petrified feeling: it arose from a want of taste in seeking distinction. "The mair they talk, I'm kenn'd the better," he had already adopted as a motto; he knew that folly such as his was not uncommon, and he hoped for one person who censured, there would be two who thought him a clever fellow, with wit at will—a little of a sinner, but a great deal of a poet.

This desire of distinction was strong in Burns. In those days he would not let a five pound note pass through his hands without bearing away a witty endorsement in rhyme: a drinking-glass always afforded space for a verse: the blank leaf of a book was a favorite place for a stanza; and the windows of inns, and even dwelling-houses which he frequented, exhibit to this day lively sallies from his hand. Yet, perhaps, a love of fame was not stronger in him than in others. In his time magazines were few, and newspapers not numerous; into the daily, weekly, or monthly papers, aspirants in verse can now pour their effusions: but Burns had no such facilities when he started, and was obliged to take the nearest way to notice. He began, likewise, to talk of his exploits over the pint-stoup: he gave to himself, in one of his rhymes, the name of "drunken ranter," and with ordinary powers, and but a moderate inclination, desired to be numbered with five-bottle debauchees, who saw three horns on the moon, and had

"A voice like a sea, and a drouth like a whale."

He went farther: he asserted, with Meston, good rhyme to be the product of good drink, and sung—

"I've seen me daiz't upon a time
I scarce could wink, or see a styme,
Just ae half-mutchkin does me prime,
Ought less is little;
Then back I rattle on the rhyme
As gleg's a whittle,"

This vaunted insobriety in verse must not be taken literally. We have seen Burns passionately in love in rhyme—we know that he was not less so with his living goddess of the hour; but it was otherwise with him in the matter of strong drink. He was no practised toper, but thought it necessary to look a gay fellow in poetry.—Inspiration, in both ancient and modern times, has been imputed to wine, and Burns wished to be thought inspired. Wine was out of his reach; his muse found her themes among humble and familiar things, and it was his boast that Ferintosh could work intellectual wonders as well as Falernian. For others, he wished Parnassus a vineyard; but for himself, he preferred the Banks of the Ayr or the Lugar to those of Helicon, and the blood of

barley to that of the grape. When he had neither money to spend on liquor, nor health to relish it, he was chaunting songs in honor of tippling; putting himself down in the list of topers, and recording that whisky was the northern ambrosia, too good for all save gods or Scotsmen. This is not unlike the madness of Johnson, from poverty, at college. In the case of Burns, there was something national as well as personal: whisky and ale are the offspring of the Scottish vales, and he preferred them to "dearthfu' wine or foreign gill." Liquor was not then, and I believe never was, a settled desire of soul with the Poet.

When Burns supposed that his "drunken rants" and nocturnal excursions among the lasses of Kyle had made him

> "——Slander's common speech,
> A text for infamy to preach,"

he found, to his surprise, that in another way he had won the approbation of certain ministers of the kirk of Scotland. How this came about may be briefly described.—Calvinism at that time was agitated with a schism among its professors, and the factions were known in the West by the names of Old Light and New Light. The Old-Light enthusiasts aspired to be ranked with the purest of the Covenanters; they patronized austerity of manners and humility of dress, and stigmatized much that the world loved, as things vain and unessential to salvation. The New Light countenanced no such self-denial; men were permitted to gallop on Sunday, to make merry and enjoy themselves; and women were indulged in the article of dress, and failings or follies were treated with mercy at least, if not indulgence. The former refused to lean on the slender reed of human works, thought a good deed savored of selfishness, and that faith, and faith alone, was the light which led to heaven: the latter thought a cheerful heart was an acceptable thing with God; that good works helped to make a good end, and that faith, and faith alone, was not religion, but a false light, which led to perdition. Like the writers in the late singular controversy on Art and Nature in poetry, the divines of the West of Scotland perhaps never concluded that faith

and works were both essential to salvation, and that, in truth, Christianity required them. Each side thundered from the pulpit; their sermons partook of the character of curses, and their conversation in private life had the hue of controversy. Their parishioners, too, raised up their voices—for, in Scotland, the meanest peasant can be eloquent and puzzling on speculative theology—and the whole land rung with mystical discussions on effectual calling, free grace, and predestination, when Burns precipitated himself into the midst of the conflict.

The Poet sided with the New-Light faction. For this several reasons may be assigned—he was not educated closely in the tenets of Calvinism; and his own good taste and sense taught him that faith without works was folly. His experience in church discipline, in the case of "Sonsie Bess," had not tended to increase his reverence for the Old-Light professors, among whom "Daddie Auld," his parish pastor, was a leader. Moreover, Gavin Hamilton, of whom he held his land, was not only a New-light-ite, but a friend of the Poet, and a martyr in the cause of free-agency. We may add to all this, that the Poet naturally fell into the ranks of those who allowed greater liberty of speech, and a wider longitude of morals. Perhaps the chiefs of the Old-Light association would have regarded little an attack in prose, as to such missiles they were accustomed; but their new enemy assaulted them with a weapon against which the armor of dulness was no defence. He attacked and vanquished them with witty verse, much to the joy of the children of the New Light, and greatly to the amusement of the country.

Of the effect of these satiric attacks, the Poet himself gives an account to Moore:—"The first of my poetic offspring which saw the light was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them dramatis personæ in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him that I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clever. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as

laity, it met with a roar of applause. 'Holy Willie's Prayer,' next made its appearance, and alarmed the kirk-session so much, that they held several meetings to look over their spiritual artillery—if haply any of it might be pointed against profane rhymers." This is almost all that the Poet says of his satiric labors in aid of the New Light. The poem to which he first alludes is called "The Holy Tuilzie," and relates the bickering which arose between Moodie, minister of Riccarton, and Russel, minister of Kilmarnock—both children of the Old Light. The poetic merit of the piece is small; the personalities marked and strong. "The Kirk's Alarm" is another of these compositions: amid much personality, and many allusions to past and passing matters, there are gleams of wit and poetry worthy of a less contracted subject. "The Ordination" succeeded, and is in a better vein. There is uncommon freedom of language and happiness of expression in almost every verse. The crowning satire of the whole is "Holy Willie's Prayer," a daring work, personal, poetical, and profane. The hero of the piece was a West-country pretender to superlative godliness; one of the Old Light faction; an elder of the kirk, who made himself busy in searching for faults in the flock. Burns first signalized him in an epitaph, in which he consigns him to reprobation, and then warns the devil that to lay his "nine-tailed cat" on such a contemptible delinquent would be little to his own credit. Then he makes Willie honestly confess his own backslidings, and explain predestination in a way that causes us to shudder as well as to smile:

> "O Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
> For reasons best kent to thysel,
> Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
> A' for thy glory;
> And no for either good or ill
> They've done afore thee."

He next bethinks him of his own glory and errors; the latter, it is quite plain, he considers but as spots in the sun—specks in the cup of the cowslip. He claims praise in the singular, and acknowledges folly in the plural:—

> "And sometimes, too, with worldly trust
> Vile self gets in,

But Thou remembers we are dust,
Defiled in sin."

Nor can Burns be said to have overlooked his own interest; he compliments Hamilton of Mossgiel as one—

"Who has so many taking arts,
O'er great and sma,
Frae God's ain priests the people's hearts
He wiles awa."

In a similar strain of poetry and wit, he, in another poem of the same period, congratulates Goudie of Kilmarnock on his work respecting revealed religion. The reasoning and the learning of the essayist are slumbering with all forgotten things; but the verses they called into life are not fated soon to die:

"O Goudie, terror of the Whigs,
Dread of black coats and reverend wigs,
Sour Bigotry on her last legs
Girning looks back,
Wishing the ten Egyptian plagues
Would seize ye quick."

In after-life, the Poet seemed little inclined to remember the verses he composed on this ridiculous controversy; and I have heard that he was unwilling to talk about the subject. Perhaps he felt that he had launched the burning darts of verse against men of blameless lives, and honesty, and learning; that his muse had wasted some of her time on a barren and profitless topic, and had sung less from her own heart than for the gratification of others. Of all these poems, he admitted but the "Ordination" into his works, willing, it would seem, to let the rest die with the controversy which occasioned them. The New-Light professors seemed to care little what sort of weapon they employed: the verse of Burns has two edges like a Highland sword, and Presbyterianism suffered as well as the Old Light. It is almost incredible that venerable clergymen applauded those profane sallies, learned them by heart, carried copies in their pockets, and quoted and recited them till they grew popular, and were on every lip. Even "Holy Willie's Prayer" was countenanced by the New-Light pastors. Among the Poet's papers was found an epistle to the Rev. John

MacMath, enclosing a copy of the prayer which he had requested; the date of this communication, 17th September, 1785, fixes the season of this western dispute. It seems, however, to approach the close; the Poet is grown weary of his work, as well he might:

> "My Musie, tired with many a sonnet,
> On gown and band and douce black bonnet,
> Is grown right eerie now she's done it,
> Lest they should blame her,
> And rouse their holy thunder on it,
> And anathem her."

Burns, during this drudgery, was strengthing his hands for higher and purer duties. In laboring to accommodate his thoughts, and

> "Riving the words to gar them clink"

in unison with the technicalities of mystical controversy, he was acquiring an almost audacious vigor of expression, and a ready skill in handling subjects either of fact or of fancy. It is true that he learned to speak profanely, but then this was in the service of the kirk; he learned something more when he dined with drunken lawyers, and grew tipsy among godly priests. The muse of Kyle helped to extinguish the Old Light, but she left predestination where she found it. A Mauchline mason said to the Poet, when he read him "Holy Willie's Prayer," "It's a' very weel and very witty, and I have laughed that shouldna have laughed; but ye'll no hinder me from thinking that Providence kend weel what he was doing when he made man—foresaw the upshot—wha was to be good and wha was to be bad; and knowing this, and making man a fallible creature still, looks as like predestination as ought I ever heard of."

These satiric rhymes established the fame of Burns in his native place: his company was now courted by country lairds, village lawyers, and parish schoolmasters, and by all persons who had education above common, or kept some state in their households. He was always welcome to Gavin Hamilton and his family; equally so to Robert Aiken, a worthy writer in Ayr; and now he became so to all who had any relish for wit or any soul for poetry. He was at once the companion of the grave

and of the giddy; now dining with the minister and a douce friend or two at the manse; then presiding in a Mason meeting, chaunting songs, and pushing about the punch with the "brethren of the mystic level," or communing on the severity of the excise laws with a "blackguard smuggler," or some highland envoy from the dominions of Ferintosh, whose "cousin did as good as keep a small still." When he appeared in company he was expected to say something clever or shrewd; he was pointed out at church and at market, and peasant spoke of him to peasant as a wild, witty lad, who lived at Mossgiel, and had all the humor of Ramsay, and more than the spirit of Fergusson.

It is humiliating to think that works which Burns seemed willing to forget brought him first into notice. Some of the most exquisite lyrics ever said or sung failed to do for him what "The Holy Tuilzie" and "The Kirk's Alarm" accomplished at once; and there can be no question that "Holy Willie's Prayer" and the "Epistle to Goudie" prepared the minds of the people around him for admiring his "Halloween" and his "Cottar's Saturday Night." In truth, poetry, which only embodies sentiments and feelings common to our nature, cannot compete in the race of immediate fame with verse appealing to our passions and our prejudices, and glowing with the heat of a passing dispute. Time settles and explains all. The true Florimel is found to be of delicate flesh and blood, breathing of loveliness and attraction, and adorned by nature; while the False Duessa is discovered to be a thing of shreds and patches, with jewels of glass, and an artificial complexion. Nature and truth finally triumph, and to nature and truth Burns accordingly returned. He left the agitated puddles of mysticism to drink at the pure springs with the muse of love, and joy, and patriotism.

Of the person and manners of the Poet, at this important period of his life, we have various accounts; but the portraits, though differing in posture as well as in light and shade, all express the same sentiment. He was now grown up to man's estate, and had taken his station as such in society; he was the head, too, of his father's

house, and though his expenses were regulated upon a system of close economy, his bargains as a farmer, controlled by his brother Gilbert, and his demeanor at the fireside under the mild influence of his mother, he had in all other matters his own will. He has recorded much of himself at this period both in verse and prose, nor can this be set down to egotism; from all the world, save the little community of Kyle, he was completely shut out, and he turned his eyes on himself, and wrote down his own hopes and aspirations. He has even recorded his stature in rhyme:—

"O! why the deuce should I repine,
Or be an ill foreboder?
I'm twenty-three, and five feet nine—
I'll go and be a sodger."

His large dark expressive eyes; his swarthy visage; his broad brow, shaded with black curly hair; his melancholy look, and his well-knit frame, vigorous and active—all united to draw men's eyes upon him. He affected, too, a certain oddity of dress and manner. He was clever in controversy; but obstinate, and even fierce, when contradicted, as most men are who have built up their opinions for themselves. He used with much taste the common pithy saws and happy sayings of his country, and invigorated his eloquence by apt quotations from old songs or ballads. He courted controversy, and it was to this period that Murdoch, the accomplished mechanic, referred, when he told me that he once heard Burns haranguing his fellow-peasants on religion at the door of a change-house, and so unacceptable were his remarks that some old men hissed him away. Nor must it be supposed that, even when listened to, he was always victorious.—"Burns, sir," said one of his old opponents, "was a 'cute chield and a witty, but he didna half like to have my harrow coming owre his new-fangled notions."

The early companions of the Poet were men above the common mark. Smith, to whom he addresses some of his finest poetic epistles, was a person of taste and sagacity; David Sillar, a good scholar, and something of a poet; Ranken, an out-spoken, ready-witted man, and a little of

a scoffer; Lapraik lived at a distance—he had written at least one song worthy of notice. Hamilton was open-hearted and open-handed, and of a good family; Aiken seems to have abounded in good sense and good feeling; Ballantyne was much of a gentleman; Parker, kind and generous; Mackenzie of Irvine, a skilful surgeon and a good scholar, who introduced the Poet to Whiteford, Erskine, and Blair;—but his chief comrade and confidant was his brother Gilbert, who at an early age distinguished himself for sense and discernment.

"Gilbert," says Mackenzie, "partook more of the manner and appearance of the father, and Robert of the mother. In the first interview I had with him at Lochlea, he was frank, modest, well-informed, and communicative. The Poet seemed distant, suspicious, and without any wish to interest or please. He kept himself very silent in a dark corner of the room, and before he took any part in conversation, I frequently observed him scrutinizing me, while I conversed with his father and his brother. From the period of which I speak, I took a lively interest in Robert Burns. Even then his conversation was rich in well-chosen figures, animated and energetic. Indeed, I have always thought that no person could have a just idea of the extent of Burns' talents, who had not heard him converse. His discrimination of character was greatly beyond that of any person I ever knew, and I have often observed to him that it seemed to be intuitive. I seldom ever knew him make a false estimate of character, when he formed the opinion from his own observation."

The sketch drawn by Sillar is of another kind:—"Robert Burns was some time in the parish of Tarbolton, prior to my acquaintance with him. His social disposition easily procured him acquaintance; but a certain satirical seasoning with which he and all poetical geniuses are in some degree influenced, while it set the rustic circle in a roar, was not unaccompanied with suspicious fear. I recollect hearing his neighbours observe he had a great deal to say for himself, and that they suspected his principles. He wore the only tied hair in the parish; and in the church his plaid, which was of a particular

color (I think fillemot), he wrapped in a peculiar manner round his shoulders. These surmises and his exterior made me solicitous of his acquaintance. I was introduced by Gilbert not only to his brother, but to the whole of that family, where, in a short time, I became a frequent, and, I believe, not unwelcome visitant. After the commencement of my acquaintance with the bard, we frequently met upon Sundays at church; when, between sermons, instead of going with our friends or lasses to the inn, we often took a walk in the fields. In these walks, I have often been struck with his facility in addressing the fair sex; and many times when I have been bashfully anxious how to express myself, he would have entered into conversation with them with the greatest ease and freedom; and it was generally a death-blow to our conversation, however agreeable, to meet a female acquaintance. Some of the few opportunities of a noontide walk that a country life allows her laborious sons, he spent on the banks of the river, or in the woods in the neighbourhood of Stair. Some book or other he always carried and read when not otherwise employed; it was likewise his custom to read at table."

A third hand completes the sketch:—"Though Burns," says Professor Walker, "was still unknown as a Poet, he already numbered several clergymen among his acquaintance: one of these communicated to me a circumstance which conveyed more forcibly than many words, an idea of the impression made upon his mind by the powers of the Poet. This gentleman had repeatedly met Burns in company, when the acuteness and originality displayed by the latter, the depth of his discernment, the force of his expressions, and the authoritative energy of his understanding, had created in the former a sense of his power, of the extent of which he was unconscious till revealed to him by accident. The second time that he appeared in the pulpit, he came with an assured and tranquil mind; and though a few persons of education were present, he advanced some length in the service, with his confidence and self-possession unimpaired. But when he observed Burns, who was of a different parish, unexpectedly enter the church, he was instantly affected

with a tremor and embarrassment which apprized him of the impression his mind, unknown to itself, had previously received."

Authorities such as these confute the inconsiderate assertions of Heron, respecting the "opening character" of the Poet. We have no proof that he became discontented in early life with the humble labors to which he saw himself confined, and with the poor subsistence he was able to earn by them—that he could not help looking upon the rich and great whom he saw around, with an emotion between envy and contempt, as if something had still whispered to his heart that there was injustice in external inequality between his fate and theirs. The early injuries of fortune oppressed him at times; but, till he was thirty years old, his spirit was buoyant and unbroken, and he looked with an unclouded brow on the world around him.

In "The Holy Fair," the Poet, accidentally or purposely, rose out of the lower regions of personal invective into the purer air of true poetry, and gave us a picture of singular breadth and beauty. The aim of the poem is chiefly to reprehend, by means of wit and humor, those almost indecent festivities which, in many western parishes, accompany the administration of the sacrament. Instead of preaching to the staid and the pious under the roof of the kirk, the scene is transferred to the open churchyard, where a tent or pulpit is erected for the preachers; while, all around, the people of the parish seat themselves on graves or grave-stones, decorously to look and listen. In the earlier days of the church, when men were more in earnest, there is no doubt that a scene such as this in the open air was attended with nothing of an objectionable nature; nay, at present, the thoughtful and the serious contemplate it as something edifying and impressive; but with the pious and the orderly come swarms of the idle and the profligate; bevies of lads and lasses keep moving about in search of better seats or finer points of view, and tiring, or affecting to tire, of the sermon, which is sometimes of the longest, retire to a neighbouring change-house, or to the open door of an ale-booth, where, as they empty the glass, they may hear the voice

of the preacher. There is no doubt that these, "Holy Fairs," as they were scoffingly called, afforded scenes more than justifying serious as well as sarcastic reproof. In the poem, Burns here and there shows he had been reading other poets. His allegorical personages are partly copied from Fergusson, and the hares that hirpled down the furs did the same for Montgomery. "The farcical scene the Poet there describes," says Gilbert, "was often a favorite field for his observation, and most of the incidents he mentions had actually passed before his eyes."

Burns now openly took upon himself the name of Poet; he not only wrote it in his books, but wrought it into his rhymes, and began to entertain hopes of distinction in the realms of song. But nothing, perhaps, marks the character of the man more than the alteration which he made in his own name. He had little relish for by-gone things; there are few gazings back at periods of honor or of woes in all his strains. The name he had hitherto borne was of old standing, the Poet sat in judgment upon it, concluded that it had a barbarous sound, and threw away Burness—a name two syllables long, and fifteen centuries old, and adopted that of Burns in its stead. Had his father been alive, this might not have happened. On the 20th of March, 1786, he says to one of his Correspondents:—"I hope some time before we hear the gouk, to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock, when I intend having a gill between us in a mutchkin stoup, which will be a great comfort and consolation to, dear Sir, your humble servant, Robert Burness."—This is the latest time that I find his original name in his own hand-writing; it is plain that, up to this period, he imagined he had achieved nothing under that of his father deserving to live.

Burns commenced emblazoning his altered name with all that is bright and lasting in verse. From the day that he entered upon Mossgiel with the resolution of becoming rich, till the dark hour on which he quitted it reduced well nigh to beggary, he continued to pour forth poem after poem, and song succeeding song, with a variety and rapidity truly wonderful. His best poems are

the offspring of those four unfortunate years, and the history of each has something in it of the curious or the romantic. "The Death and dying words of Poor Mailie," and, better still, "Poor Mailie's Elegy," were written before the death of his father—at least the former was. The Poet had, it seems, bought a ewe with two lambs from a neighbour, and tethered her in a field at Lochlea. "He and I," says Gilbert, "were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers to drive for us, at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch."

The "Elegy" has much of the Poet's latter freedom and force. He had caressed this four-footed favorite till she followed at his heels like a dog:—

"Through a' the town she trotted by him,
A lang half mile she could descry him,
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed;
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er came nigh him,
Than Mailie dead."

One of the rejected verses ought to be remembered in Kyle, were it but for the honor done to the lambs of Fairlee:—

"She was nae get o' runted rams,
Wi' woo like goats, an' legs like trams,
She was the flower o' Fairlee lambs,
Of famous breed;
Now Robin greetin chews the hams
O' Mailie dead."

The image in the two last lines is out of harmony with the sentiment of the poem; and Burns, whose taste was born with him, omitted the verse in consequence.

The "Epistle to David Sillar" was written some time in the summer of 1784. Burns was in the habit of composing verse at the plough or the harrows:—he turned it over in his mind for several days, and when he had polished it to his satisfaction, or found a moment's leisure, committed it to paper. Gilbert relates that he was weeding with Robert in the kaleyard, when he repeated the principal part of the Epistle. The first idea of his

becoming an author was then started. "I was much pleased," says his brother, "with the Epistle, and said to him that I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scotch poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression; but here there was a train of interesting sentiment, and the Scotticism of the language scarcely seemed affected, but appeared to be the natural language of the poet; that, besides, there was certainly some novelty in a poet pointing out the consolations that were in store for him when he should go a-begging. Robert seemed pleased with my criticism, and we talked of sending it to some magazine."

If we credit the accuracy of the verse, and the memory of Gilbert, the Poet was, in 1784, acquainted with Jean Armour, and her admirer and lover. It is more likely that the verse in which her name occurs was added afterwards, unless we believe that he had made an inroad among the "Mauchline belles," almost as soon as he went to Mossgiel. His epistles are of high merit. They are perhaps the finest compositions of the kind in the language—airy, elegant, and philosophic—with more nature than Prior's Epistle to "Fletwood Shepherd," and equal power of illustration. He had already begun to take those serious looks at human life of which his poems are full; nor did he fail to perceive how unequally the gifts of fortune, as well as those of genius, are divided.

> "It's hardly in a body's power
> To keep at times from being sour,
> To see how things are shared;
> How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
> While coofs on countless thousands rant,
> And kenna how to wair't."

He lived long enough to think more deeply and more darkly on this topic. At present the world was brightening before him—the mist seemed rolling away from his path, and he felt disposed to enjoy life without murmuring.

The epistolary form was a favorite way with Burns of

giving air to his opinions and feelings; when he had doubts of fame—was o'ermastered with his passions—or disgusted with

"The tricks of knaves and fash of fools."

he lifted the pen and indited an epistle to a friend, and poured out the loves, the cares, the sorrows, the joys, the hopes, and the fears of the passing moment. It is truly wonderful with what ease and felicity—nay, with what elegance, he twines the garlands of his fancy round a barren topic. Much of his history may be sought for in these compositions. In his "Epistle to Smith," he alludes to his Poems: intimates that he had thoughts of printing them, pretends to take alarm at the sight of moths revelling on the pages of authors:—

"Far seen in Greek, deep men of letters,"

and philosophically exclaims as well as poetically—

"Then farewell hopes o' laurel boughs
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang,
And teach the lonely heights an' howes
My rustic sang."

Burns takes a loftier view of the matter in his Epistle to Lapraik, written on the 1st of April, 1785. He intimates that he is no poet in the high acceptation of the word; but a rhymer, who deals in homely words, and has no pretence to learning. He pulls himself down, but he refuses to let any one else up; he prefers a spark of nature's fire to all the artificial heat of education, and speaks contemptuously of "critic-folk," and learned judges.

"What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

"A set o' dull, conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college classes,
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!"

In a second epistle to the same person, Burns claims for "the ragged followers of the Nine" a life of immortal light, and presents to their contemplation the sordid sons of Mammon suffering under the transmigration of souls.

"Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless neivefu' of a soul
May in some future carcase howl,
The forest's fright;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light."

In a poetic letter to another of his companions while exulting in the idea of making the rivers and rivulets of Kyle flow bright in future song, he lets us into the secret of his own mode of musing:—

"The Muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
Till by himsel' he learn'd to wander
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray, an' pensive ponder
A heartfelt sang!"

Of these poems we are informed that the first Epistle to John Lapraik was written in consequence of a clever song which that indifferent rhymer had made under the inspiration of adversity. The Epistle to Ranken carries its own explanation with it: we may allow it to remain concealed in the thin mist of allegory. The Epistle to Smith is perhaps the very best of all these compositions: the singular ease of the verse; the moral dignity of one passage; the wit and humor of a second; the elegance of compliment in a third; and the life which animates the whole, must be felt by the most ordinary mind. One of the verses was frequent on the lips of Byron during the darkening down of his own day:—

"When ance life's day draws near the gloamin',
Then farewell vacant, careless roamin',
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
An' social noise;
An' fareweel, dear deluding woman!
The joy of joys!"

In the winter of 1785, Burns composed his "Address to the Deil." His sable majesty is familiar to the imagination of every Scottish peasant, and there are few wild

glens in which he has not been heard or seen. The Satan of Milton was a favorite with the Poet; he admired his fortitude in enduring what could not be remedied, and pitied a noble and exalted mind in ruins. This feeling he united to the traditions of shepherds and husbandmen, and treated the Evil Spirit with much of the respect due to fallen royalty. "It was, I think," says Gilbert, "in the winter, as we were going together with carts for coal to the family fire, and I could yet point out the particular spot, that the author first repeated to me the 'Address to the Deil.'" That Burns was now acquainted with Jean Armour the variations of this poem sufficiently prove:—

"Lang syne, in Eden's happy scene,
When strappin' Adam's days were green,
And Eve was like my bonny Jean,
My dearest part,
A dancing, sweet, young, handsome quean,
Wi' guileless heart."

The evil spirit of religious controversy was now fairly out of him: he makes no allusions, though the temptation was great, to the clergy, but treats the subject with natural truth and vigor. All northern natures sympathize in the following fine stanza:—

"I've heard my reverend graunie say
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld-ruined castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way
Wi' eldritch croon."

There is something of serious jocularity in the verse which expresses the Poet's fears and hopes of futurity:—

"An' now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin',
A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin'
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn a corner jinkin',
An' cheat you yet."

In the contemplated repentance of Satan, Burns seems to hint at universal redemption—a finishing touch of fine and unexpected tenderness.

The "Halloween" is a happy mixture of the dra-

matic and the descriptive, and bears the impress of the manners, customs, and superstitions of the people. We see the scene, and are made familiar with the actors; we not only see them busied in the mysteries of the night, but we hear their remarks; nor can we refrain from accompanying them on their solitary and perilous errands to "winnow wechts of naething, sow hemp-seed, pull kale-stocks, eat apples at the glass;" or, more romantic still, "wet the left sleeve of the shirt where three lairds' lands meet at a burn." The whole poem hovers between the serious and the ludicrous: in delineating the superstitious beliefs and mysterious acts of the evening, Burns keeps his own opinion to himself. The scene is laid in the last night of harvest, as the name implies, at a husbandman's fireside, whose corn is gathered into the stack-yard and the barn; and the hands which aided in the labor are met—

> "To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,
> An' haud their Halloween."

They seem not unaware that while they are merry, or looking into futurity, fairies are dancing on Cassilis-Downans, and witches are mounted on their "ragweed nags," hurrying to some wild rendezvous, or concerting with the Author of mischief fresh woes for man. It is the most equal of all the Poet's compositions.

A singular poem, and in its nature personal, was also the offspring of the same year. This is "Death and Doctor Hornbook." The hero of the piece was John Wilson, schoolmaster of the parish of Tarbolton: a person of blameless life, fond of argument, opinionative, and obstinate. At a mason-meeting, it seems he provoked the Poet by questioning some of his positions in a speech stuffed with Latin phrases and allusions to pharmacy. The future satire dawned on Burns at the moment, for he exclaimed twice, "Sit down, Doctor Hornbook!" On his way home he seated himself on the parapet of a bridge near "Willie's Mill," and in the moonlight began to reflect on what had passed. It then occurred to him that Wilson had added to the moderate income of his school the profit arising from the sale of a few common medicines; this suggested an interview with "Death," and

all the ironical commendations of the Dominie which ollowed. He composed the poem on his perilous seat, and when he had done, fell asleep; he was awakened by the rising sun, and, on going home, committed it to paper, It exhibits a singular union of fancy and humor; the attention is arrested at once by the difficulty felt in counting the horns of the moon, and we expect something to happen when his shadowy majesty comes upon the stage, relates his experience in "nicking the thread and choking the breath," and laments how his scythe and dart are rendered useless by the skill of Dr. Hornbook. On the appearance of the poem, Wilson found the laugh of Kyle too much for him—

"The weans held out their fingers laughin'."

So he removed to Glasgow, where he engaged with success in other pursuits. He lives, but loves no one the better for naming the name of Poet, or making any allusion to the poem. Burns repeated the satire to his brother during the afternoon of the day on which it was composed. "I was holding the plough," said Gilbert, "and Robert was letting the water off the field beside me."

The patriotic feelings of the Bard were touched when he took up the song of "Scotch Drink" against the government of the day, and uttered his "Earnest Cry and Prayer to the Scottish Representatives in the House of Commons." Yet bitter as he sometimes is, and overflowing with humorous satire, these poems abound with natural and noble images; nay, he scolds himself into a pleasant mood, and scatters praise on the "chosen Five-and-Forty," with much skill and discrimination. His praise of whiskey is strangely mingled with sadness:—

"Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin';
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin'
When heavy dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin';
But, oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down hill, scrievin',
Wi' rattlin' glee.

"Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' droopin' Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labor sair;
At 's weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile."

A country forge with a blazing fire, an anxious blacksmith, and a welding-heat, will rise to the fancy readily on reading these inimitable stanzas:—

"When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
O rare! to see thee fizz an' freath
I' th' luggit caup!
Then *Burnewin* comes on like death
At ev'ry chap!

"Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel,
The brawnie, bainie ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' study ring an' reel
Wi' dinsome clamor."

Nor are there wanting stanzas of a more solemn kind to bring trembling to our mirth. The Scotsman dying on a battle-field with the sound of victory in his ear, is a noble picture:—

"Nae cauld faint-hearted doubtings tease him,
Death comes!—wi' fearless eye he sees him,
Wi' bloody hand a welcome gies him,
An' when he fa's
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him
In faint huzzas."

He steps at once from the serious to the comic: his description of Mother Scotland sitting on her mountain throne, her diadem a little awry, her eyes reeling, and the heather below becoming moist during her prolonged libations, is equally humorous and irreverent. Those who may suspect that all this singing about liquor arose from a love of it, will be glad to hear that when Nanse Tinnoch was told that Burns proposed to toast the Scotch members in her house "nine times a week," she exclaimed, "Him drink in my house! I hardly ken the color o' his coin."

The year 1785 was a harvest-season of verse with Burns. Some of his poems he hesitated for a while to make public; others he copied, and scattered amongst his friends. Of these one of the most remarkable is "The Jolly Beggars." This drama, which I cannot help considering the most varied and characteristic of the Poet's works, was unknown, save to some west country acquaintances, till after his death, when it came unexpectedly out. The

opening seems uttered by another muse than Coila—the sound is of the elder days of verse; but the moment the curtain draws up and shows the actors, the spirit of Burns appears kindling and animating all. It is impossible to deny his presence :—

"First, neist the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel braced wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm—
She blinkit on her sodger.

"An' ay he gies the tosie drab
The tither skelpin' kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an awmous dish,
Ilk smack still, did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whip,
While staggering and swaggering
He roar'd this ditty up."

The scene of this rustic drama lies in Mauchline, and the actors are strolling vagrants, who having acquired meal and money by begging, pilfering, and slight-of-hand, assembled in Posie Nansie's to "toom their pocks and pawn their duds," and

"Gie ae night's discharge to care,"

over the gill-stoup and the quaigh. They hold a sort of Beggars' Saturday-night—sing songs, utter sentiments, and lay down the loose laws of the various classes they represent. The characters are numerous. The maimed soldier, who bore scars both for Scotland and for love; and his doxy, warm with blankets and usquebaugh, who in her youth forsook the sword for the sake of the church, but returned to the drum when age brought reflection. The merry-andrew, who would venture his neck for liquor, who held love to be the half of his craft, and yet was a fool still;—the highland dame who had lightened many a purse—been ducked in many a well; who, with a countryman, had laid the land under contribution from Tweed to Spey, and was only hindered from making a foray farther south by the interposition of the "waefu' woodie!" The pigmy scraper wi' his fiddle;—the sturdy tinker, who had "travelled round all Christian ground"

in his vocation, and swore by all was swearing worth whenever he was moved;—and, last of all, the "wight of Homer's craft," who, though lame of a foot, had three wives, and could allure the people round him in crowds when he sung of love and country revelry. All these, and more, sing and shout, and talk and act in character; and unite in giving effect to the chorus of a song which claims, for the jovial ragged ring, exemption from the cares which weigh down the sedate and the orderly, and a happiness which refuses to wait on the train-attended carriage, or on the sober bed of matrimony. The curtain drops as they all shout,

> "A fig for those by law protected,
> Liberty's a glorious feast,
> Courts for cowards were erected,
> Churches built to please the priest."

There is nothing in the language which, for life and character, approaches this singular "Cantata." The Beggar's Opera is a burial compared to it; it bears some resemblance to the Wallenstein's Camp of Schiller, as translated by Lord Francis Leveson Gower; the same variety, and the same licence of action and speech distinguish both.

The origin of the cantata is worth relating. Mauchline ale and Mauchline maidens frequently brought the Poet from Mossgiel, which lies but some half-a-mile distant. He frequented the public-house of John Dow on those occasions, in the immediate vicinity of the scene of "The Jolly Beggars." The house of Posie Nansie, *alias* Agnes Gibson, stands opposite nearly to the churchyard gate. One night it happened that Smith of Mauchline, and Burns, on their way up the street, heard the sound of "meikle fun and jokin'" in Nansie's hostelry, and saw lights streaming from the fractured windows. On entering, they found a company of wandering mendicants enjoying themselves over the dear keilbagie. They were welcomed with cheers, entered into the humors of the scene, called for more liquor, and the noise and fun grew fast and furious. Burns paid much attention to an old soldier with a "wooden arm and leg," whose drollery was unbounded. In a few days he rough-wrote the

cantata, and showed it amongst his friends. He gave the only copy now known to be in existence to David Woodburn; it is at present in the hands of Thomas Stewart of Greenock.

It is probable that the Poet found it an easier task to delineate the characters and indite the songs of the Cantata than to endow the "Mouse" and the "Daisy" with sentiments of terror and of pity. A common ploughman would have stamped his tacketed shoe upon the one, saying "Down, vermin!" or helped the furrow over upon the other, pronouncing it a weed. With far other feelings the ploughman of Mossgiel saw the ruin of the one, and the destruction of the other. "The verses to the Mouse and the Mountain Daisy," says Gilbert, "were composed on the occasions, and while the author was holding the plough. I could point out the particular spot where each was composed. Holding the plough was a favorite situation with Robert for poetic compositions, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise. Several of the poems were written for the purpose of bringing forward some favorite sentiment of the author." When the coulter passed through the nest of leaves and stubble, the Poet assured the timid mouse, as it fled in terror, that the best laid schemes of men were frustrated, as well as those of mice; and that though its house was laid in ruins, and winter afforded no materials for constructing a new one, still its lot was bliss compared with his own. It was touched only with the passing, while he was affected with the past—felt the present, and dreaded the future. A similar train of sentiment runs through the "Daisy:" the Poet buries its opening bloom with the plough, and grieves that he cannot save a thing so lovely; nay, lest the flower should mistake the crash of the cruel coulter for the pressure of some gentler thing, he exclaims, with equal tenderness and beauty:—

"Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' spreckled breast,
When upward springing, blythe, to greet
The purpling east."

He suddenly turns from the fate of the flower to his own, and draws the same dark conclusions as he did in the "Mouse;"

"Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date;
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom;
Till, crush'd beneath thy furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom."

His poetry abounds in melancholy predictions about himself; he had visions of beauty and of grandeur, but along with them came darker visions: want and ruin, sorrow and neglect, death and the grave.

The fine poem of "Man was made to Mourn" was composed by Burns for the purpose of bringing forward a favorite sentiment.—"He used to remark to me," says Gilbert, "that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be illustrated, the elegy of 'Man was made to Mourn' was composed." The germ of the composition may be found in "The Life and Age of Man," which the Poet's mother was wont to sing to his grand-uncle. The same sentiment is common to both; the same form of expression, and the same words, may be traced in every verse; "Man is made to mourn," is the introductory exclamation of the old; "Man was made to mourn," is the chorus of the new. Nor is the earlier poem without pathos and force; the periods of man's life are compared to the months of the year: the child is born in January, flourishes in July, and dies in December; the parallel is well maintained:—

"Then cometh May, gallant and gay,
When fragrant flow'rs do thrive,
The child is then become a man,
Of age twentie-and-five."

"December fell, both sharp and snell,
Makes flowers creep to the ground;
Then man's threescore, both sick and sore,
No soundness in him found."

To make each month of the year correspond with five years of a man's life, the moralizing bard of the year six-

teen hundred and fifty-three extinguished the faculties of man at sixty; the bard of seventeen hundred and eighty-six says nothing of life's duration, but sings the sorrows of him who, overwrought and abject, has to beg leave to toil from a lordly fellow-worm, who scorns his poor petition, and turns him over to idleness and woe. The question which the Poet asks is one not easily answered by the oppressor:—

"If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law design'd—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?"

The sage of the banks of Ayr intimates to the indignant bard that a future state, where the great and the wealthy cease from troubling, is the only hope and refuge of those—"who weary laden mourn." His own desolate condition and dreary prospects raised those darksome ideas.

In the truly noble poem of "The Vision" Burns imagines himself seated, in a winter night, by his fire, which burns reluctantly; weary with the flail, he proceeds to muse on wasted time. In his sight the scene is dark enough; he has spent the prime of youth in making rhymes for fools to sing; he has neglected advice which would have placed him at the head of a market; and now, "half-mad, half-fed, half-sarket," he is sitting undistinguished and poor. Stung with these reflections, he starts up, and is about to swear to refrain rhyme till his latest breath, when the door opens, the fire flames brighter, and a strange and lovely lady comes blushing to his side:—

"Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted graceful round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token,
An' come to stop those reckless vows
Wou'd soon been broken."

His surmise was just: she was the Muse of Kyle—his

own inspirer; nay, she had a handsome leg like his Mauchline Jean, and looked the express image of his own mind:—

"A 'hair-brained, sentimental trace'
Was strongly marked in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, e'en turned on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honor."

On her mantle were pictured the district and heroes of Kyle; but she came to speak, and not to be looked at. She claimed Burns for her own bard; told him to lament his luckless lot no longer; that he was there to fulfil the social plan of Nature, and form a not unimportant link in the great chain of being. She was intimate with all his outgoings. Her words are useful to the biographer; they exhibit the Poet in his studious moods:—

"'I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove through the sky;
I saw grim Nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.'"

She observed, too, that beauty agitated his frame—communicated to his tongue words of persuasion and grace, and inspired him with musical and voluntary numbers: she saw more—

"'I saw thy pulse's maddening play
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven."

His visitor assured him that the wealth of Potosi, or the regard of monarchs, could not at all equal the pleasure he would feel as a rustic poet, and entreated him to fan the tuneful flame, preserve his dignity, and trust for protection to the universal plan of the Creator:—

"'And wear thou this,'—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red
Did rustling play,
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away."

Frequent bursts of religious feeling and a fine spirit of morality, are visible in much that Burns wrote; yet only one of his poems is expressly dedicated to devotion—"The Cotter's Saturday Night." The origin of this noble strain is related by his brother:—"Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God,' used by a decent sober head of a family introducing family worship. The hint of the plan and title of the poem were taken from Fergusson's 'Farmer's Ingle.' When Robert had not some pleasure in view, in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together when the weather was favorable on the Sunday afternoon, those precious breathing times to the laboring part of the community, and enjoyed such Sundays as would make us regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the author repeat the 'Cotter's Saturday Night.'"

The poem is a picture of cottage devotion, by a hand more solicitous about accuracy than effect; for no one knew better than Burns that invention could not heighten, nor art embellish a scene in which man holds intercourse with Heaven. His natural good taste told him that his work-day burning impetuosity of language and intrepid freedom of illustration were unsuitable here; he calmed down his style into an earnest and touching simplicity, which has been mistaken by critics for tameness; but the strength of the poem is proved by the numerous and beautiful images, all of a devotional character, which it impresses on the mind. Religion is the leading feature of the whole; but love in its virgin state, and patriotism in its purity, mingle with it, and give a gentle tinge, rather than a decided color, to the performance. The scene is peculiar to Scotland. With what natural art the Poet introduces us to the cotter, and to his happy home, and gradually prepares us, by a succession of solemn images, for the opening of the Bible and the pouring out of prayer!

The winter day is darkening into night, the blackening trains of crows seek the pine-tree tops, and the toil-worn cotter lays together his spades and hoes, and, "hoping

the morn in ease and rest to spend," walks homewards over the moor:—

> "At length his lonely cot appears in view,
> Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
> The expectant wee-things, toddlin,' stacher thro',
> To meet their dad, wi' flicherin' noise an' glee.
> His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,
> His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
> The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
> Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
> An' makes him quite forget his labor and his toil."

Presently the elder children, released by Saturday night from their weekly servitude among the neighbouring farmers, come "drappin' in;" and Jenny, their eldest hope, now woman grown, shows a "braw new gown," or puts her wages into her parents' hands, to aid them, should they require it. Amid them the anxious mother sits, and with her needle and shears,

> "Gars auld claes look amaist as weel 's new;—
> The father mixes a' wi' admonition due."

The admonition of this good man to his children is, to be obedient to those above them; to mind their labors, nor be idle when unobserved; and chiefly to fear the Lord, and duly, morn and night, implore his aid and counsel. While this is going on, a gentle rap is heard at the door, and "a strappan youth," who "taks the mother's eye," is introduced by Jenny as a neighbour lad, who, among other things, had undertaken to see her safely home. The visit is well taken, for he is neither wild nor worthless, but come of honest parents, and is, moreover, blate and bashful, and for inward joy can scarce behave himself. The mother knows well what makes him so grave; the father converses about horses and ploughs, while the supper-table is spread, and milk from her only cow, and a "weel-hained cheese," of a peculiar flavor, and a twelvemonth old "sin' lint was i' the bell," are placed by the frugal and happy mother before the lothful stranger.

> "The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face
> They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
> The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
> The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;
> His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
> His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;

Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care,
And 'let us worship God'! he says, with solemn air."

The canker-tooth of the most envious criticism cannot well fasten on a work in every respect so perfect; nor, in expatiating upon it, are we going out of the direct line of biography: it is known to be, in part, a picture of the household of William Burness. From pictures of national manners and sentiment we must turn to matters more personal.

Of the maidens of Kyle, who contributed by their charms of mind or person to the witchery of the love songs of Burns, I can give but an imperfect account.—The young woman who "had pledged her soul to meet him in the field of matrimony, yet jilted him with peculiar circumstances of mortification," he has not named; and I believe her charms, real or imaginary, have remained unsung. The Tibbie who scorned the advances of the Poet, and "spak na, but gade by like stoure," was a neighbouring laird's daughter, with a portion of two acres of peatmoss, and twenty pounds Scots. The Peggy who inspired some of his early lyrics was the sister of a Carrick farmer, a girl prudent as well as beautiful. The Nannie, who lived among the mosses near the Lugar, was a farmer's daughter, Agnes Fleming by name, and charmed the sweet song of "My Nannie O" from him, by the elegance of her person and melody of her voice. "Green grow the Rashes," was a general tribute paid to the collective charms of the lasses of Kyle; there were few with whom he had not held tryste,

"Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the evening gale."

Some of those maidens were but, perhaps, the chance inspirers of his lyric strains. "Highland Mary," and "Mary in Heaven," of whom he has so passionately sung, was a native of Ardrossan. Those who think that poetry embalms high names alone, ladies of birth and rank must prepare to be disappointed, for Mary Campbell was a peasant's daughter, and lived, when she captivated the Poet, in the humble situation of dairy-maid in "the castle o' Montgomery." That she was beautiful, we have other testimony than that of Burns: her charms attracted gazers,

if not wooers, and she was exposed to the allurements of wealth. She withstood all temptation, and returned the affection of the Poet with the fervor of innocence and youth. "After a pretty long trial," says Burns, "of the most ardent, reciprocal affection, we met, by appointment, on the second Sunday of May, in a sequestered spot on the banks of the Ayr, where we spent a day in taking a farewell, before she should embark for the West Highlands, to arrange matters among her friends for our projected change of life. At the close of the autumn following, she crossed the sea to meet me at Greenock, where she had scarce landed, when she was seized with a malignant fever, which hurried my dear girl to her grave in a few days, before I could even learn of her illness."—"This adieu was performed," says Cromek, "in a striking and moving way; the lovers stood on each side of a small brook, they laved their hands in the stream, and holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other. They parted never to meet again!"

The Bible on which they vowed their vows, is in the possession of the sister of Mary Campbell, at Ardrossan. On the first volume is written by the hand of Burns: "And ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord.—*Leviticus*, chap. xix. v. 12." On the second volume, the same hand has written; "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths.—*St. Matthew*, chap. v., v. 33." And on the blank leaves of both columns is impressed his mark as a mason, and also signed below, "Robert Burns, Mossgiel." These are touching insertions, but not more so than the verses in which he has embodied the parting scene:—

"How sweetly bloomed the gay-green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom.
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie,
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary."

To the same affectionate young creature, Burns addressed a strain of scarcely inferior beauty, beginning with

"Will ye go to the Indies my Mary,
And leave old Scotia's shore?"

Nor did he forget her worth in after-life; his heart and fancy frequently travelled back to early scenes of joy or sorrow. Who the Mary Morison was on whom he wrote one of his early songs, I have not been able to discover; nor do I know the name of the heroine of "Cessnock Banks." Their beauty seems like that of many others, to have passed suddenly over him, touching his fancy without affecting his heart. The Eliza, from whom he seems so loth to part, in one of his songs, was, I am told by John Galt, less beautiful than witty.

To the charms of Jean Armour I have already alluded. This young woman, the daughter of a devout man and master-mason, lived in Mauchline, and was distinguished less for the beauty of her person, than for the grace of her dancing and the melody of her voice. Burns seems to have become attached to her soon after the loss of his Highland Mary. In one of his joyous moments, he warned the maidens of Mauchline against reading inflammatory novels,—"their fine Tom Jones and Grandisons" served only as snares, he said, for their innocence :—

"Such witching books
Are baited hooks
For rakish rooks
Like Rob Mossgiel."

Who those maidens were he tells us in rhyme :—

"In Mauchline there dwells six proper young belles,
The pride of the place and its neighbourhood a';—
—Miss Miller is fine and Miss Markland's divine,
Miss Smith she has wit and Miss Betty is braw,
There's beauty and fortune to get with Miss Morton,
But Armour's the jewel for me o' them a'."

How the Poet and his Jean became acquainted is easily imagined by those who know the facilities for meetings of the young which fairs, races, dances, weddings, housheatings, and kirn-suppers afford; of the growth of affection between them it is less easy to give an account; we must trace it by the uncertain light of his poetry.

In the "Epistle to Davie" he alludes to Jean Armour by name, and calls her his own; in "The Vision" he compliments the Muse of Kyle by comparing her clean straight

and taper limbs to those of his bonnie Jean; and in one of his lyrics he speaks of the sighs and vows which have passed between them among the sequestered hills. It would seem, however, that during the season of their courtship the Poet felt less sure of the continuance of her affection than he had looked for, and something like change may be inferred from his omitting a verse in the "Address to the Deil," in which he likened Eve to Jean Armour;—

> "A dancing sweet young handsome quean,
> Wi' guileless heart."

Gilbert charges his brother with seeing charms in some of the maidens of Kyle which others could not observe; but that may be said of all beautiful things. The ladies whom he celebrated in the latter days of his inspiration were—some of them at least—eminently lovely; and we all know that he has imputed no more merit to his Jean than what she possessed. Burns assured Professor Walker that his first desire to excel as a poet arose from the influence of the tender passion; and he informed others that all the heroines of his songs were real, and not imaginary. He dealt in

> "No idly feigned poetic pains,
> No fabled tortures quaint and tame."

As the Poet rose, and the lover triumphed, the farmer sunk. The farm of Mossgiel lies high, on a cold, wet bottom. During the first four years of the lease, instead of kindly and congenial seasons, the springs were frosty and late, the summers moist and cold; and to this the Poet glances when he makes the old dame in Halloween relate her experiences:—

> "The simmer had been cauld and wat,
> And stuff was unco green."

Frosty springs and late cold summers could not be foreseen, but any one might have known high lying land on a wet bottom. Seasons in which the sun is almost scorching other grounds are most congenial for such soils, and no one should venture upon a farm which requires something like a miracle in the weather to render it productive. That Burns took pleasure in the labors of agriculture we have the assurance of many a voice: he often alludes to

the holding of the plough, the turning of a handsome furrow; and he rejoices, too, in the growing corn, sees it fall before the sickle with something of a calculating eye, and raises the rick, and coats it over with broom against sleet and snow with all the foresight of a farmer. Of his prowess with the flail, he says;—

"The thresher's weary flinging tree
The lee-lang day had tired me."

And Gilbert says, with the scythe Robert excelled all competitors: he had the sleight which is necessary with strength and activity. In ploughing he was likewise skilful: in the "Farmer's Address to his Mare," evidently alluding to himself, he says;—

"Aft thee an' I in aught hours gaun,
In guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither."

Elsewhere the Poet speaks of his toil in committing the seed-corn to the furrow, and makes the Muse plead it as an excuse for declining laboring on Parnassus in the month of April:—

"Forjeskit sair, wi' weary legs,
Rattlin the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing through amang the naigs
Their ten-hours' bite,
My akwart Muse sair pleads and begs
I wadna write."

Of his farming establishment he gives us some insight in his facetious inventory to the surveyor of the taxes: it is pleasing to go to the homestead of even the cold and ungenial Mossgiel, and look at the "gudes, and gear, and graith," with Burns for our guide:—

"*Imprimis.* then, for carriage cattle;
I have four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew afore a pettle.
My lan'-afore's a gude auld has-been,
An' wight an' wilfu' a' his days been.
My lan'-ahin's a weel graun fillie,
That aft has borne me hame frae Killie,
And your auld burro' mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime—
My fur-ahin's a worthy beast
As e'er in tug or tow was traced.

The fourth's a Highland Donald hastie.
A d—n'd red-wud Kilburnie blastie!
Forbye a cowt o' cowts the wale,
As ever ran afore a tail."

Of his milk-cows and calves, ewes and lambs, the mandate required no specification: the Poet proceeds to his farming implements; they are far from numerous:—

"Wheel carriages I ha'e but few,
Three carts, an' twa are feckly new;
An auld wheelbarrow, mair for token,
Ae leg an' baith the trams are broken."

Ploughs, harrows, shel-bands, rollers, spades, hoes, and fanners, were not taxed, and are omitted, which I am sorry for; we come now to the members of his household:—

"For men, I've three mischievous boys,
Run de'ils for rantin' an' for noise,
A gaudsman ane, a thrasher t'other,
Wee Davock hauds the nowt in fother."

Nor is the Bard unmindful of maintaining rule and spreading information amongst his menials:—

"I rule them as I ought, discreetly,
An' aften labor them completely;
An' ay' on Sundays duly, nightly,
I on the questions targe them tightly."

With respect to maid-servants, as his mother and sisters managed the inn-door economy of the house, he had no occasion for any; he desired besides, he said, to be kept out of temptation; neither had he a wife, and as for children, one more had been sent to him than he desired:—

"My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,
She stares the daddie in her face,
Enough of ought ye like but grace."

Burns saw in the failure of the farm the coming ruin of his mother's household, and despairing of success in agriculture, revived a notion which he had long entertained of going out as a sort of steward to the plantations, a situation which, for a small salary, requires the presence of many high qualities. Nor did he take this resolution one moment too soon: his poetic account of his condition and sufferings is not at all poetical;—

"To tremble under Fortune's cummock,
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock,
For his proud, independent stomach,
Could ill agree."

But bodily discomfort was not all: he might, to use his own language, have braved the bitter blast of misfortune, which, long mustering over his head, was about to descend; but sorrows of a tender nature, from which there was no escape, came pouring upon him in a flood.

This part of the Poet's history has been painted variously: delicacy towards the living, and respect for the dead, seemed to call for gentle handling; but this could not always be obtained; for rude hands were but too ready to aggravate the outline and darken the colors. The courtship between Burns and Jean Armour continued for several years; and there is no question, had fortune permitted, but that they would have been man and wife the first year of their acquaintance. But Burns was not poor only—he had no chance of becoming rich, and the day of marriage was placed at the mercy of fortune. There were other obstacles: Jean was not only the daughter of a man rigid and devout, but the favorite child of one of the believers in the glory of the Old Light. Her father discountenanced the addresses which a profane scoffer, and irreligious rhymer was making to his child, and the lovers, denied the sanction of paternal care, and the shelter of the domestic roof, had recourse to stolen meetings under the cloud of night; to twilight interviews under the greenwood tree; to the solace of "a cannie hour at e'en," and those "sighs and vows among the knowes" of which the Poet has sung with so much passion. In protracted courtship there is always danger; prudence seldom takes much care of the young and the warm-hearted: Jean was not out of her teens, and thought more of her father's ungentleness than of her own danger; the Poet's respect for sweetness and innocence protected her for a while—but he was doomed to feel what he afterwards sung:—

"Wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
Wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am!"

These convoyings home in the dark, and meetings under "the milk-white thorn," ended in the Poet being promised to be made a father before he had become a husband. This, to one so destitute and utterly poor as Burns, was a stunning event: but that was not the worst; the father of Jean Armour heard with much anguish of his favorite daughter's condition; and when, on her knees before him, she implored forgiveness, and showed the marriage lines—as the private acknowledgment of marriage without the sanction of the kirk is called—his anguish grew into anger which overflowed all bounds, and heeded neither his daughter's honor nor her husband's fame. He snatched her marriage certificate from her, threw it into the fire, and commanded her to think herself no longer the wife of the Poet. It must be accepted as a proof of paternal power that Jean trembled and obeyed: she forgot that Burns was still her husband in the sight of Heaven, and according to the laws of man: she refused to see him, or hearken to aught he could say; and, in short, was ruled in every thing by the blind hatred of her father.

What the Poet thought of all this we have abundance of testimony. Though his indignation against Mr. Armour could not but be high, it is to his honor that he refrained from giving him further pain than he had inflicted already: he spoke, too, of Jean more in sorrow than in anger. In the first outburst of passion, on finding that she refused to call herself his wife, and had allowed her marriage lines to be burnt, he indulged in a sort of bitter mirth; and, in a poem of great merit, and greater freedom of expression, sang of the vexation which Kyle and her maidens must feel at parting with one who could doubly soothe them with love-making and song. He alludes to the causes of his departure to the West Indies—

> "He saw Misfortune's cauld nor-west
> Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
> A Jillet brak his heart at last,
> Ill may she be!
> So took a birth afore the mast,
> An' owre the sea."

He speaks, too, of his way of life, and accounts for the

poverty of a poet with a clear income of seven pounds a year!—

"He ne'er was gien to great misguiding,
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was under hiding,
He dealt it free;
The Muse was a' that he took pride in,
That's owre the sea."

This mirthful mood did not last long; there is little gaiety in his letter to David Bryce, of June 12th, 1786,—"I am still in the land of the living, though I can scarcely say in the place of hope. What poor ill-advised Jean thinks of her conduct, I don't know; but one thing I do know—she has made me completely miserable. Never man loved, or rather adored, a woman more than I did her; and, to confess a truth between you and me, I do still love her to distraction after all. My poor dear unfortunate Jean! It is not the losing her that makes me so unhappy, but for her sake I feel most severely: I foresee she is in the road to, I fear, eternal ruin. May Almighty God forgive her ingratitude and perjury to me, as I from my very soul forgive her; and may his grace be with her and bless her in all her future life! I can have no nearer idea of the place of eternal punishment than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. I have tried often to forget her; I have run into all kinds of dissipation and riots, mason-meetings, drinking-matches, and other mischief, to drive her out of my head, but all in vain. And now for a grand cure: the ship is on her way home that is to take me out to Jamaica; and then farewell, dear old Scotland! And farewell, dear ungrateful Jean! for never, never will I see you more." In this touching letter the Poet sets off his own sufferings against Jean Armour's shame; and we may calculate their depth and acuteness from his looking on her as ungrateful.

He gave vent to the same feeling in the most pathetic of all modern poems, "The Lament for the unfortunate Issue of a Friend's Amour:" every stanza is most exquisitely mournful:—

"No idly feigned poetic pains
My sad love-lorn lamentings claim:
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:
The plighted faith, the mutual flame,
The oft-attested powers above,
The promised father's tender name—
These were the pledges of my love."

The account rendered by Gilbert makes Robert consent to the destruction of the marriage lines, which is at least doubtful. In truth, there was much anguish on all sides; and, condemning the stern father as we do, we cannot help reverencing the feeling which sacrificed his daughter's peace in this world, in the belief that he was securing happiness for her in the next. That he doubted her constancy, I have heard affirmed by those who had an opportunity of knowing; and, to remove temptation from her path, acquiesced in the Poet's resolution to push his fortune in Jamaica, though there is no foundation, perhaps, for the surmise that he more than tolerated the parish authorities to pursue Burns according to law, for the maintenance of the promised babe, in order to hasten his departure. This is, nevertheless, countenanced by the circumstance of his ability to keep the child. Had he promised this, the Poet would not have been obliged to skulk "from covert to covert, under all the terrors of a jail;" and he means more than the usual parochial authorities, when he says—"Some ill-advised persons had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels."

Amid all these miseries of mind and sufferings of body, Burns brought out that volume which first told the world that a new and a mighty poet had arisen in the land. This, though forced from him by "the luckless star which ruled his lot," had been often present to his contemplation. He resorted to it not so much to gratify his love of fame, as with the hope that the publication would bring money enough to convey him over the Atlantic; nor were friends wanting to aid him in this very moderate desire. It is to the credit of the personal merit of Burns, and to the honor of his associates, that they shrunk not from his side in the trying hour of adversity.

Among these, Gavin Hamilton; Robert Aiken, writer, Ayr; John Ballantine, banker, Ayr; Robert Muir, merchant, Kilmarnock; and William Parker, merchant, Kilmarnock, were the most active and conspicuous. Parker alone subscribed for thirty-five copies. There is little merit in discovering and befriending genius when Fame is sounding her trumpet, and crying, "Behold the man whom the king delighteth to honor!" but to mark talents, and aid them when the possessor is struggling out of darkness into light, shows either great generosity or a fine judgment, or both. Thus supported, he was enabled to enter into terms with Wilson, a printer, in Kilmarnock. The Poet undertook to supply manuscript, walk daily into Kilmarnock to correct the press, and pay all the expenses incident to printing six hundred copies.

Of what passed in the mind of Burns at this moment, we have his own account to Moore:—"I weighed," said he, "my productions as impartially as was in my power. I thought they had merit; and it was a delicious idea that I should be called a clever fellow, even though it should never reach my ears—a poor negro-driver, or perhaps a victim to that inhospitable clime, and gone to the world of spirits. To know myself had been all along my constant study; I weighed myself alone, I balanced myself with others, I watched every means of information, to see how much ground I occupied as a man and a poet; I studied assiduously Nature's design in my formation, where the lights and shades in character were intended. I was pretty confident my poems would meet with some applause; but, at the worst, the roar of the Atlantic would deafen the voice of censure, and the novelty of West Indian scenes make me forget neglect. I threw off six hundred copies, having got subscriptions for about three hundred and fifty." "Wee Johnnie," the printer, the body without a soul of the Poet's epigram, shrewdly remarked that a poem of a grave nature would be better for beginning with: Burns acted on the hint, and in walking between Kilmarnock and Mossgiel, composed the "Twa Dogs." At that period, ruin had him so effectually in the wind, that even food become scanty; a

piece of oat-cake and a bottle of two-penny ale made his customary dinner, when correcting the first edition of his immortal works, and of this he was not always certain.

In July, 1786, the Poems of Burns made their appearance; he introduced them with a preface, intimating his condition in life, and claiming for them the protection of his country. "Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt, and saw in himself and their rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toils and fatigues of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings, the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world—always an alien scene—a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward. 'Humility,' says Shenstone, 'has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!' If any critic catches at the word genius, the author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities; otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done would be a manœuvre below the worst character which he hopes his worst enemy will ever give him." The heart-warm welcome which his poems received in his own district fulfilled the hopes of the Poet; all read who could obtain the book, and all who read applauded; even the children of the Old Light admitted that he was a wondrous rhymer to be a profane person. The whole impression was soon disposed of; the fears of "Wee Johnnie," the printer, anent remuneration were allayed, and twenty pounds and odd remained in the pockets of the wondering bard, after defraying all expenses. The first use he made of his good fortune was to renew his application for a situation in the West Indies, and lay aside a sum sufficient to waft him over the sea. With a desire of keeping such a genius at home, his steadfast friends, Hamilton and Aiken, sought to obtain him an appointment in the Excise—an evil which awaited him on a latter day.

With some, the rising of this western star in poetry was looked for; his poems in manuscript had been widely circulated in Ayrshire, but to Scotland at large his appearance was unexpected; and had a July sun risen on a December morning, the unwonted light could not have given greater surprise. The fame of the bard of Mauchline flew east, west, north, and south. A love of poetry belongs as much to the humble classes of the north as to the high; and to people who had much of Ramsay and Fergusson by heart, the more lofty and passionate poetry of Burns could not fail to be welcome. The milkmaid sung his songs, the ploughmen and shepherds repeated his poems, while the old and the sagacious quoted his verses in conversation, glad to find that matters of fancy could be made useful. My father, who was fond of poetry, procured the volume from a Cameronian clergyman, with this remarkable admonition, "Keep it out of the way of your children, John, lest ye catch them as I caught mine, reading it on the Sabbath."

"It is hardly possible," says Heron, "to express with what eager admiration and delight the poems were every where received. They eminently possessed all those qualities which can contribute to render any literary work quickly and permanently popular. They were written in a phraseology of which all the powers were universally felt; and which being at once antique, familiar, and now rarely written, was hence fitted to serve all the dignified and picturesque uses of poetry, without making it unintelligible. The imagery, the sentiments, were at once faithfully natural, and irresistibly impressive and interesting. Those topics of satire and scandal in which the rustic delights, that humorous delineation of character, and that witty association of ideas, familiar and striking, yet not naturally allied to one another, which has force to shake his sides with laughter; those fancies of superstition at which he still wonders and trembles; those affecting sentiments and images of true religion, which are at once dear and awful to his heart, were represented by Burns with all a poet's magic power. Old and young, high and low, grave and gay, learned or ignorant, all were alike delighted, agitated, and transported."

To many copies of his works the Poet added other attractions: he caused blank leaves to be inserted, on which he wrote such favorite sallies of love or humor as he had refrained from printing; or, more solicitous still to please, inscribed neat and complimentary lines addressed to those who, by their taste and station, might either feel his merit or be disposed to patronize him. Of those whom he sought to propitiate, one of the most eminent was Dugald Stewart: during the summer months the professor and his lady lived at Catrine, Burns was sometimes their guest; and much as they were pleased with his verses, they were still more so with his conversation, which was unaffected and manly. During one of his visits he was introduced to Lord Daer, and as this seems to have been the first time he had met a lord, he recorded the event in rhymes equally vigorous and untranslatable; his emotions are described as no one but himself could have described them:—

> "But, oh! for Hogarth's matchless power,
> To show Sir Bardie's willyart glower,
> An' how he stared and stammered,
> When goavan as if led wi' branks,
> An' stumpan on his ploughman shanks,
> He in the parlor hammered."

His poems touched the gentlest hearts: Mrs. Stewart of Stair, a lady accomplished as well as beautiful, was one of the first to admire them, and to seek the acquaintance of the author; neither her kindness nor that of the Stewarts of Catrine were forgotten. Upon the robe of Coila he depicted perhaps too many complimentary things: in the "Brigs of Ayr" he is more select:—

> "Next followed Courage, with his martial stride,
> From where the Feal wild woody coverts hide;
> Benevolence, with mild, benignant air,
> A female form, came from the towers of Stair:
> Learning and Worth in equal measures trod
> From simple Catrine, their long loved abode."

Nor did Burns think this enough: the woods of Catrine are mentioned in one or more of his succeeding songs, and the Lady of the Towers of Stair is remembered in a lyric of no common beauty. He imagines himself straying on the banks of Afton Water, and perceives the hero-

ine asleep among the flowers on its side. He then addresses the stream, and promises to sing a song to its honor if it will flow softly, nor disturb the repose of one so sweet and beautiful. The lady understood the forward ways of the muse, and smiled. Mrs. Scott, of Wau-chope-house, a painter and poetess, in a rhyming letter of considerable ease and gaiety, intimated her admiration of the "Cantie, witty, rhyming ploughman." In his answer Burns alludes to his aspirations, when "beardless, young and blate," with great felicity :—

"Even then a wish, I mind its power,
A wish, that to my latest hour
Shall strongly heave my breast,
That I, for poor auld Scotland's sake,
Some useful plan or book could make,
Or sing a sang at least."

But the friendship which the various biographers of Burns seem to be most solicitious about, is that of Mrs. Dunlop, of Dunlop. That lady, the daughter of Sir Thomas Wallace of Craigie, was proud of her descent from the race of Elderslie, and proud of her acquirements, which were considerable. Nor should we leave unmentioned that she had some talent for rhyme. She had been ailing, and the first advantage which she took of returning health was to read the poems of the Ayrshire ploughman. She was struck with the beauty, natural and religious, of the "Cotter's Saturday Night."—"The Poet's description of the simple cottagers," she told Gilbert Burns, "operated on her mind like the charm of a powerful exorcist, repelling the demon *ennui*, and restoring her to her wonted harmony and satisfaction." An express, sent sixteen miles, for half-a-dozen copies of the book, and an invitation to Dunlop-house, attested her sincerity. Nor was the Poet less sincere in his answer—he admired her illustrious ancestor. "In my boyish days," he observes, "I remember in particular being struck with that part of Wallace's story where these lines occur :—

'Syne to the Leglen wood when it was late,
To make a silent and a safe retreat.'

I chose a fine summer Sunday, the only day my line of life allowed, and walked half-a-dozen miles to pay my

respects to the Leglen wood, with as much devout enthusiasm as ever pilgrim did to Loretto; and as I explored every den and dell where I could suppose my heroic countrymen to have lodged, I recollect—for even then I was a rhymer—that my heart glowed with a wish o be able to make a song on him in some measure equal to his merits." All this was in unison with the feelings of the lady as well as with his own. From this period we must date a friendship which did not close with the Poet's life, and to which we owe many of his most dignified and happy letters.

But the notice of lords, the attention of professors, and the kindness of beauty, were empty though honorable things; the twenty pounds which his speculation in verse brought diminished rather than increased, and he felt, with a darkening spirit, that he could not live on applause. It never seems to have occurred to any one of his wealthy admirers that he was in a state of destitution, and that many places of profit existed which he could fill with honor. He who is invited to feast at a distance with the powerful and the polite—who has to walk seven miles of rough road to the dinner-table—is expected to write songs on the beautiful—be witty with the witty, and at midnight return to his blanket and his straw, must be considered as having earned his dinner fairly—and this happened often to Burns. All that his poetry brought him was barren applause; and when he consulted "Wee Johnnie" about publishing a second edition, the printer demurred, which so incensed the Poet, that he would not speak again on the subject, and refused the generous offers of several of his first and best friends to subscribe for copies enow to secure Wilson against loss. He now looked seriously to the West Indies, procured the situation of overseer on an estate in Jamaica belonging to Dr. Douglas, and prepared for departure. Of this all his friends seem to have been aware, but no one interposed. It was now the middle of November, and the sound which his poems had raised in the country began to die away.

There was still one family of influence in the district to whom Burns had not been introduced; and as no one had tried to do this for him, he now resolved to do it for

himself. In the preceding July, it seems, he had accidently met Miss Alexander, of Ballochmyle, a young lady of great beauty, among her native woods on the banks of Ayr. How the river banks looked in those days I know not, but the bard instantly clothed them with flowers, gave odorous dews to the grass, a richer incense to the fields of beans, a sweeter song to the thrush, and a brighter sunshine to the tree-tops; and into this natural shrine introduced his new object of adoration, under the name of "The Lass of Ballochmyle." Neither elegance of thought nor of expression were wanting to render the compliment acceptable:—

"With careless step I onward strayed,
My heart rejoiced in nature's joy,
When musing in a lonely glade
A maiden fair I chanced to spy;
Her look was like the morning's eye,
Her air like nature's vernal smile,
Perfection whisper'd, passing by,
'Behold the lass of Ballochmyle.'"

As he proceeds with his song, the Bard recollects that loveliness is sent into the world for other purposes than to be gazed at, and exclaims, much to the distress of gentle critics and fastidious spinsters—who looked, it seems, for a display of chivalry instead of nature:—

"O! had she been a country maid,
And I the happy country swain,
Tho' shelter'd in the lowliest shed
That ever rose on Scotland's plain,
Thro' weary winter's wind and rain
With joy, with rapture, I would toil,
And nightly to my bosom strain
The bonnie lass o' Ballochmyle."

He copied this fine lyric out in a fair hand, and sent it to Miss Alexander, accompanied by a letter, the composition of which, it is said, cost him more than the song. It has not, however, all the happy ease of the verse. Of the song he says:—"The scenery was nearly taken from real life, though I dare say, madam, you do not recollect it, as I believe you scarcely noticed the poetic *rêveur* as he wandered by you. I had roved out as chance directed, in the favorite haunts of my muse on the banks of Ayr, to view nature in all the gaiety of the vernal year. The eve-

ning sun was flaming over the distant western hills; not a breath stirred the crimson opening blossom or the verdant spreading leaf. It was a golden moment for a poetic heart. I listened to the feathered warblers pouring their harmony on every hand with a congenial kindred regard, and frequently turned out of my way, lest I should disturb their little songs, or frighten them to another station. Such was the scene and such the hour, when in a corner of my prospect, I spied one of the fairest pieces of Nature's workmanship that ever crowned a poetic landscape or met a poet's eye, those visionary bards excepted who hold converse with aërial beings. Had Calumny and Villany taken my walk, they had at that moment sworn eternal peace with such an object. What an hour of inspiration for a poet! it would have raised plain dull historic prose into metaphor and measure. The enclosed song was the work of my return home; and, perhaps, it but poorly answers what might have been expected from such a scene."

What the lady thought of the song we are not told—what Burns thought of her silence he has informed us. She paid no attention to his effusions, and wounded his self-love by her ungracious neglect. Currie and Lockhart have united in defending the "Lass of Ballochmyle." "Her modesty," says the first, "might prevent her from perceiving that the muse of Tibullus breathed in this nameless poet, and that her beauty was awakening strains destined to immortality on the banks of the Ayr. Burns was at that time little known, and, where known at all, noted rather for the wild strength of his humor than for those strains of tenderness in which he afterwards so much excelled. To the lady herself, his name, perhaps, had never been mentioned."—"His verses," says the latter, "written in commemoration of that passing glimpse of her beauty, are conceived in a strain of luxurious fervor, which, certainly, coming from a man of Burns' station and character, must have sounded very strangely in a delicate maiden's ear." These remarks might have been spared; the man and his poems were well known to all in the west country long before the 18th of November, 1786: we must not suppose Miss Alexander more fastidious

and difficult to please than Mrs. Stewart of Catrine, Mrs. Stewart of Stair, or Mrs. Dunlop, with all of whom he was living on terms of friendship before that time. He who had written and published "Man was made to Mourn," "The Daisy," "The Mouse," and "The Cotter's Saturday Night," was known for more than the wild strength of his humor; nor can we imagine that any lady of education could feel much alarm at the fervor of the song: Miss Alexander knew that poetry and love are brothers, and that the latter acknowledges no other merit than what is personal. The Poet chose, rather than "raise a mortal to the skies," to "bring an angel down."

This was the last of his efforts to obtain notice in his native district. He now wrote to his friends, Hamilton and Aiken, saying he was afraid that his follies would prevent him from enjoying a situation in the Excise, even if it could be procured; he was pining in secret wretchedness; disappointment, pride, and remorse were settling on his vitals like vultures, and in an hour of social mirth his gaiety was the madness of an intoxicated criminal under the hands of the executioner.—"All these reasons," he says, "urge me to go abroad, and to all these reasons I have only one answer—the feelings of a father. This, in the present mood I am in, overbalances every thing that can be laid in the scale against it." He wrote in the same strain to others. This was on the 19th of November; on the 20th he enclosed a copy of "Holy Willie's Prayer" to his comrades, Chalmers and M'Adam, desiring it might be burnt, as a thing abominable and wicked, at the Cross of Ayr; and on the 22nd he wrote as he imagined, the last song he was to measure in Caledonia:—

"The gloomy night is gath'ring fast,
Loud roars the wild, inconstant blast,
Yon murky cloud is foul with rain,
I see it driving o'er the plain;
Chill runs my blood to hear it rave,
I think upon the stormy wave,
Where many a danger I must dare,
Far from the bonnie banks of Ayr."

It was well for the world, and, perhaps, unfortunate

for Burns, that when he had bid farwell to his friends, put his chest on the way to Greenock, and was about to follow, a letter from Dr. Blacklock overthrew all his schemes. The way this came about has something in it of the romantic. Laurie, minister of Loudoun, a kind and stedfast friend, sent a copy of the poems, with a short account of Burns, to his friend, Dr. Blacklock, a middling poet, but a most worthy man, with unbounded kindness of nature and generosity of soul. Blacklock was blind, and as he could not read for himself, an almost fatal delay took place: the ship was unmooring, and the Poet on the wing, when his opinion of the poems, and the steps which he advised the author to take, reached the hands of Laurie. The letter was instantly forwarded to Burns, who read it with surprise not unmingled with tears. The blind bard was none of your cold formal men who give guarded opinions—he said what he felt; and as his heart was in the right place, spoke out with a warmth and an ecstasy new in the province of criticism:—

"Many instances have I seen," he says, "of nature's force or beneficence exerted under numerous and formidable disadvantages, but none equal to that with which you have been kind enough to present me. There is a pathos and delicacy in his serious poems, a vein of wit and humor in those of a more festive turn, which cannot be too much admired nor too warmly approved; and I think I shall never open the book without feeling my astonishment renewed and increased. It has been told me by a gentleman to whom I showed the performances, and who sought a copy with diligence and ardor, that the whole impression is already exhausted. It were, therefore, much to be wished, for the sake of the young man, that a second edition, more numerous than the former, should immediately be printed; as it appears certain that its intrinsic merit, and the exertions of the author's friends, might give it a more universal circulation than any thing of the kind which has deen published in my memory."—"This encouragement," says Burns, "fired me so much, that away I posted to Edinburgh, without a single acquaintance or a single letter of introduction. The baneful star that had so long shed its blasting influ-

ence on my zenith for once made a revolution to the nadir." That he was personally unknown to any one of influence in Edinburgh, save Dugald Stewart, and that he took letters of introduction to no one, is perfectly true. Pride had something to do in this. He had begun to feel that a warm dinner and a kind word were to be his chief portion in Kyle; and the silence of one, and the coldness of another, stung him, it is said, deeper than even he was willing to allow. He determined to owe his future fortune, whatever it might be, to no one around; he turned his face to Arthur's Seat, and sung with much buoyancy of heart, as he went, a soothing snatch of an old ballad:—

"As I came in by Glenap,
I met with an aged woman,
She bade me cheer up my heart,
For the best of my days was coming."

PART II:—EDINBURGH.

THE first appearance of Burns in Edinburgh was humble enough. The money reserved to waft him to the West Indies had been laid out on clothes for this new expedition, or on the family at Mossgiel; and, having little in his pocket, he found his way to his friend Richmond, a writer's apprentice, and accepted the offer of a share of his room and bed, in the house of a Mrs. Carfrae, Baxter's-close, Lawn-market. Though he had taken a stride from the furrowed field into the land of poetry, and abandoned the plough for the harp, he seemed for some days to feel, as in earlier life, unfitted with an aim, and wandered about, looking down from Arthur's Seat, surveying the Palace, gazing at the Castle, or contemplating the windows of the booksellers' shops, where he saw all works, save the poems of the Ayrshire Ploughman. He found his way to the lowly grave of Fergusson, and, kneeling down, kissed the sod: he sought out the house of Allan Ramsay, and, on entering it, took off his hat; and, when he was afterwards introduced to Creech, the bib-

liopole, remembered that he had before heard him inquiring if this had been the shop of the author of "The Gentle Shepherd." In one of these excursions he happened to meet with an Ayrshire friend, Mr. Dalrymple, of Orangefield; others say Mr. Dalzell—and some say both—by whom he was introduced to James Earl of Glencairn, who took him by the hand, and with small persuasion prevailed on Creech to become the publisher of the contemplated edition on terms favorable to Burns. The Poet stipulated to receive one hundred pounds for the copyright of one edition, with the profits of the subscription copies. A prospectus was drawn out, a vast number printed and circulated over the Island, and subscriptions came pouring in with a rapidity unknown in the history of Scottish genius.

It is honorable to the patricians of the north that they welcomed the Poet with much cordiality, and subscribed largely; it is honorable to the stately literati of Edinburgh that they not only received their rustic brother gladly into their ranks, but spoke every where of his fine genius with undissembled rapture, and introduced him wherever introductions were beneficial: but it is still more honorable to the husbandmen, the shepherds, and the mechanics of Scotland, that though wages were small, and money scarce, they subscribed for copies, in fifties and in hundreds, and thus extended the patronage, always the most welcome since it implies admiration. Of the noblemen, the most active was the Earl of Glencairn; through his influence the association, called the Caledonian Hunt, consisting of the chiefs of the northern aristocracy, consented to accept the dedication of the new edition, and to subscribe individually for copies: the gentlemen, too, of the west, proud that their district, long unproductive in high genius, had ceased to be barren, vied with each other in promoting the interest of the Bard of Kyle; while Blair, Robertson, Blacklock, Smith, Fergusson, Stewart, Mackenzie, Tytler, and Lords Craig and Monboddo—all men distinguished in the world of letters, lent their still more effectual aid; nay, some of them carried the subscription-lists in their pockets, and obtained names through all their wide range of acquaintance.

Burns arrived in Edinburgh at the close of November, 1786; and before, as he poetically said, the cry of the cuckoo was heard, no less than two thousand eight hundred and odd copies were subscribed for by fifteen hundred and odd subscribers. His genius was already felt by high and low—lettered, and unlettered. The Caledonian Hunt took one hundred copies; Creech took five hundred; the Earl of Eglinton, forty-two; the Duchess of Gordon, twenty-one; the Earl of Glencairn, and his Countess, twenty-four; the Scots College at Valladolid, the Scots College at Douay, the Scots College at Paris, the Scots Benedictine Monastery at Ratisbon, severally took copies; Campbell, of Clathick, subscribed for twelve; Douglas, of Cavers, for eight; Dalrymple, of Orangefield, for ten; Dunlop, of Dunlop, for six; Sir William Forbes, of Pitsligo, for eight; Lord Graham, for twelve; Gray, of Gartcraig, for six; Sir James Hunter Blair, for eight; Hamilton, of Argyle-square, Edinburgh, for eight. Subscriptions for four copies are very numerous: one-half, however, of the list is composed of humble names; nor should the weavers of the west be forgotten. The sons of the shuttle went not more willingly from Kilmarnock to Mauchline Holy Fair, than they poured in their names for their Poet's works.

Of the manners and appearance of Burns in Edinburgh much has been written and said; every step which he took to the right or to the left has been noted; the company which he kept has afforded matter for philosophic speculation, and his sayings and doings have found a place in the memoranda of the learned, and in the memories of the polite. Even when weighed in the balance of acquired taste and artificial manners, the Poet was scarcely found wanting: he was come of a class who think strongly, speak freely, and act as they think. The natural good manners which belong to genius were his: but accustomed to hold argument with his rustic compeers, and to vanquish them more by rough vigor than by delicate persuasion, he had some difficulty in schooling down his impetuous spirit into the charmed circle of conventional politeness. That he sometimes observed and sometimes neglected this is natural enough; the fervid

impatience of his temper hurried him into the van at times when his post was in the rear. He had too little tolerance for the stately weak and the learnedly dull; and holding the patent of his own honors immediately from God, he scarcely could be brought to pay homage to honors arising from humbler sources.

But if he refused to be tame in the society of the titled and the learned, he was another being in the company of the fair and the lovely. His poetry at first sprung from love; and though ambition now claimed its share, the softness and amenity of the purer passion triumphed, and with the lovely he was all pathos and persuasion, gaiety and grace. His look changed, his eye beamed milder, all that was stern or contradictory in his nature vanished when he heard the rustle of approaching silks: charmed himself by beauty, he charmed beauty in his turn. In large companies the loveliness of the north formed a circle round where he sat; and with the feathers of duchesses and ladies of high degree fanning his brow, he was all gentleness and attention. The Duchess of Gordon said that Burns, in his address to ladies, was extremely deferential, and always with a turn to the pathetic or the humorous, which won their attention; and added with much naïveté, that she never met with a man whose conversation carried her so completely off her feet. He who was often intractable and fierce in the presence of a man, grew soft and submissive in the company of woman: this was neither unobserved or unrewarded.—When, in his latter days, many men looked on the setting of the star of Burns with unconcern or coldness, the fair and the lovely neither slackened in their admiration or their friendship.

How he appeared in the sight of others, Dugald Stewart has told us.—"He came," says the Professor, "to Edinburgh early in the winter: the attentions which he received during his stay in town from all ranks and descriptions of persons, was such as would have turned any head but his own. I cannot say that I could perceive any unfavorable effect which they left on his mind. He retained the same simplicity of manners and appearance which had struck me so forcibly when I first saw him in

the country; nor did he seem to feel any additional self-importance from the number and rank of his new acquaintance. His dress was perfectly suited to his station—plain and unpretending, with sufficient attention to neatness. If I recollect right, he always wore boots; and when on more than usual ceremony, buckskin-breeches. His manners were then, as they continued ever afterwards, simple, manly, and independent; strongly expressive of conscious genius and worth, but without any thing that indicated forwardness, arrogance, or vanity. He took his share in conversation, but not more than belonged to him; and listened, with apparent attention and deference, on subjects where his want of education deprived him of the means of information. If there had been a little more of gentleness and accommodation in his temper, he would, I think, have been still more interesting; but he had been accustomed to give law in the circle of his ordinary acquaintance, and his dread of any thing approaching to meanness or servility rendered his manner somewhat decided and hard. Nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable among his various attainments than the fluency, and precision, and originality of his language when he spoke in company; more particularly as he aimed at purity in his turn of expression, and avoided more successfully than most Scotchmen the peculiarities of Scottish phraseology.

"In the course of the spring (1787) he called on me once or twice at my request, early in the morning, and walked with me to Braid Hills in the neighbourhood of the town, where he charmed me still more by his private conversation than he had ever done in company. He was passionately fond of the beauties of nature; and I recollect he once told me, when I was admiring a distant prospect in one of our morning walks, that the sight of so many smoking cottages gave a pleasure to his mind which none could understand who had not witnessed, like himself, the happiness and worth which cottages contained. Among the poets whom I have happened to know, I have been struck in more than one instance with the unaccountable disparity between their general talent and the occasional inspirations of their more favored moments.—But all the faculties of Burns' mind were, as far as I could

judge, equally vigorous, and his predilection for poetry was rather the result of his own enthusiastic and impassioned temper, than of a genius exclusively adapted to that species of composition. From his conversation I should have pronounced him to be fitted to excel in whatever walk of ambition he had chosen to exert his abilities. Notwithstanding various reports I heard during the preceding winter, of Burns' predilection for convivial and not very select society, I should have concluded in favor of his habits of sobriety, from all of him that ever fell under my own observation."

Nor is the testimony of Professor Walker less decided; for him, as well as for Burns, Doon had poured all her floods—the rising sun had glinted gloriously over Galston Moors, and snow had lain untrodden on the hills of Ochiltree: he was a native of Kyle, and interested in all that added to its renown. "In conversation Burns was powerful, his conceptions and expressions were of corresponding vigor, and on all subjects were as remote as possible from common-places. Though somewhat authoritative, it was in a way that gave little offence, and was readily imputed to his inexperience in those modes of smoothing dissent and softening assertion, which are important characteristics of polished manners. After breakfast, I requested him to communicate some of his unpublished pieces, and he recited his farewell song to the Banks of Ayr, introducing it with a description of the circumstances in which it was composed, more striking than the poem itself. He had left Dr. Laurie's family, and on his way home had to cross a wide stretch of solitary moor. His mind was strongly affected by parting for ever with a scene where he had tasted so much elegant and social pleasure. The aspect of nature harmonized with his feelings—it was a lowering and heavy evening; the wind was up, and whistled through the rushes and long spear-grass which bent before it; the clouds were driven across the sky, and cold pelting showers, at intervals, added discomfort of body to cheerlessness of mind. His recitation was plain, slow, articulate and forcible, but without any eloquence or art. He did not always lay the emphasis with propriety, nor did he humor the sentiment by the variations of his voice."

As Heron—a man who rose by the force of his talents, and fell by the keenness of his passions—is the least favorable to the Poet of all his biographers, we may quote him without fear:—"The conversation of Burns was, in comparison with the formal and exterior circumstances of his education, perhaps even more wonderful than his poetry. He affected no soft airs or graceful motions of politeness, which might have ill accorded with the rustic plainness of his native manners. Conscious superiority of mind taught him to associate with the great, the learned, and the gay, without being overawed into any such bashfulness as might have made him confused in thought or hesitating in elocution. In conversation he displayed a sort of intuitive quickness and rectitude of judgment upon every subject that arose; the sensibility of his heart and the vivacity of his fancy gave a rich coloring to whatever reasoning he was disposed to advance, and his language in conversation was not at all less happy than his writings; for these reasons he did not fail to please immediately after having been first seen. I remember that the late Dr. Robertson once observed to me, that he had scarcely ever met with any man whose conversation discovered greater vigor and activity of mind than that of Burns."

The more generous looked with wonder on the bold Peasant, who had claimed and taken place with the foremost, and who seemed to have endowments of every kind equal to his ambition; while other geniuses, raised by the artificial heat of colleges and schools, glanced with scorn or envy on one who had sprung into fame through the genial warmth of nature. Henry Mackenzie was not of the latter; as soon as he read the poems of Burns, he perceived that the right inspiration was in them, and recommended them and their author to public notice, in a paper in The Lounger, written with feeling and truth. The criticism struck the true note of his peculiar genius, and with something like prescience, claimed the honors of "National Poet," which have since been so strongly conceded.

This was regarded by some as not a little rash on the part of Mackenzie; the rustic harp of Scotland had not

been for centuries swept by a hand so forcible and free; the language was that of humble life, the scenes were the clay-cottage, the dusty barn, and the stubble field, and the characters the clouterly children of the penfold and the plough. There was nothing in the new prodigy which could be called classic, little which those who looked through the vista of a college reckoned poetical; and his verses were deemed rather the effusions of a random rhymer than a true poet. Speaking from his heart, Mackenzie spoke right; and in claiming for Burns the honors due to the elect in song, he did a good deed for genius. The Poet now stood at the head of northern song, and with historians, and philosophers, and critics applauding, he looked upon himself as "owned" by the best judges of his country.

The well-timed kindness of Mackenzie was never forgotten by Burns; from this time he prized the Man of Feeling as a book next in worth to the Bible; he never mentioned the author save in terms of affectionate admiration, and ranked him among his benefactors:—

> "Mackenzie, Stewart, sic a brace
> As Rome ne'er saw."

He felt his high, and, to his fancy, dangerous elevation:— "You are afraid," he thus writes, January 15, 1787, to Mrs. Dunlop, "I shall grow intoxicated with my prosperity as a poet. Alas! madam, I know myself and the world too well. I do not put on any airs of affected modesty; I am willing to believe that my abilities deserve some notice; but in a most enlightened age and nation, when poetry is and has been the study of men of the first natural genius, aided with all the powers of polite learning, polite books, and polite company, to be dragged forth to the full glare of learned and polite observation, with all my imperfections of awkward rusticity and crude unpolished ideas on my head! I have studied myself, and know what ground I occupy; and, however a friend or the world may differ from me in that particular, I stand for my own opinion in silent resolve, with all the tenaciousness of property. I mention this to you once for all to disburthen my mind, and I do not wish to hear or say more about it; but 'when proud fortune's ebbing

tide recedes,' you will bear me witness that, when my bubble of fame was at the highest, I stood unintoxicated with the inebriating cup in my hand, looking forward, with rueful resolve, to the hastening time when the blow of calumny should dash it to the ground with all the eagerness of vengeful triumph."

The Poet speaks, about the same time, in a similar strain to the Rev. Mr. Laurie, who, it seems, had warned him to beware of vanity, and of prosperity's spiced cup. A tone of despondency, too, is visible in his letters to Dr. Moore:—"Not many months ago," he observes, "I knew no other employment than following the plough, nor could boast any thing higher than a distant acquaintance with a country clergyman. Mere greatness never embarrasses me; I have nothing to ask from the great, and I do not fear their judgment; but genius, polished by learning, and at its proper point of elevation in the eye of the world, this, of late, I frequently meet with, and tremble at its approach. I scorn the affectation of seeming modesty to cover self-conceit. That I have some merit I do not deny; but I see, with frequent wringings of heart, that the novelty of my character, and the honest national prejudice of my countrymen, have borne me to a height altogether untenable to my abilities."

Burns indicates the station to which he must soon descend still more plainly to another correspondent. The Earl of Buchan had advised him to visit the battle-fields of Caledonia, and, firing his fancy with deeds wrought by heroes, pour their deathless names in song. When the prophet retired to meditate in the desert, he was miraculously fed by ravens; but the peer forgot to say how the poet was to be fed when musing on the fields of Stirling, Falkirk, and Bannockburn. That Heaven would send food while he produced song, seems not to have entered into his mind: for he says—"My Lord—in the midst of these enthusiastic reveries, a long-visaged, dry, moral-looking phantom strides across my imagination, and pronounces these emphatic words:—'I, Wisdom, dwell with Prudence. Friend, I do not come to open the ill-closed wounds of your follies and misfortunes merely to give you pain. I have given you line upon line, and precept upon

precept; and while I was chalking out to you the straight way to wealth and character, with audacious effrontery you have zig-zagged across the path, contemning me to my face. You know the consequences. Now that your dear-loved Scotia puts it in your power to return to the situation of your forefathers, will you follow these will-o'-wisp meteors of fancy and whim, till they bring you once more to the brink of ruin? I grant that the utmost ground you can occupy is but half a step from the veriest poverty—still it is half a step from it. You know how you feel at the iron gripe of ruthless oppression—you know how you bear the galling sneer of contumelious greatness. I hold you out the comforts of life, independence, and character, on the one hand; I tender you servility, dependence, and wretchedness on the other. I will not insult your understanding by bidding you make a choice.' "

He intimated his intention of returning to the plough still more publicly, when, in the new edition of his works, April, 1787, he thus addressed the noblemen and gentlemen of Scotland:—"The poetic Genius of my country found me as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough—and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my natal soil in my native tongue. I tuned my wild artless notes as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my songs under your honored protection. I do not approach you, my lords and gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication to thank you for past favors; that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning, that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this address with the venal soul of a servile author looking for a continuation of those favors. I was bred to the plough, and am independent." This bold language sounded strangely in noble ears. It was set down by some as approaching to arrogance—was regarded by others as the cant of independence; or considered by a few as rude and vulgar, and remembered when the Poet looked for some better acknowledgment for his genius than a six-shilling subscription, or an invitation to dine. Silence, perhaps, would

have been best; but if it were necessary to speak, I cannot see that he could have spoken better.

The Poet spent the winter and spring of 1787 in Edinburgh, much after his own heart; he loved company, and was not unwilling to show that nature sometimes bestowed gifts against which rank and education could scarcely make good their station. This was, perhaps, the unwisest course he could have pursued: a man with ten thousand a year will always be considered by the world around superior to a man whose wealth lies in his genius; the dullest can estimate what landed property is worth, but who can say what is the annual value of an estate which lies in the imagination? In fame there was no rivalry; and in station, what hope had a poet with the earth of his last turned furrow, still red on his shoon, to rival the Montgomerys, the Hamiltons, and the Gordons, with counties for estates, and the traditional éclat of a thousand years accompanying them? In the sight of the great and the far-descended, he was still a farmer, for whom the grass-market was the proper scene of action, and the husbandmen of the land the proper companions; his company was sought, not from a sense that genius had raised him to an equality with lords and earls, but from a wish to see how this wild man of the west would behave himself in the presence of ladies, plumed and jewelled, and lords clothed in all the terrors of their wealth and titles.

The beautiful Duchess of Gordon was, in those days, at the head of fashion in Edinburgh; a wit herself, with some taste for music and poetry; she sought the acquaintance of Burns, and invited him to her parties. Lord Monboddo, equally accomplished and whimsical, gave parties, after what he called the classic fashion; he desired to revive the splendid suppers of the ancients, and placed on his tables the choicest wines, in decanters of a Grecian pattern, adorned with wreaths of flowers: painting lent its attractions as well as music, while colors of all kinds were diffused from visible or invisible scources. Into scenes of this kind, and into company coldly polite and sensitively ceremonious, the brawny Bard of Doon-side, equally rash of speech and unceremonious in conduct, precipitated

himself; but rich wines and lovely women, like the touch of the goddess which rendered Ulysses acceptable in the sight of princesses, brightened up the looks of the Poet, and inspired his tongue with that conquering eloquence which pleased fastidious ladies. In fine company, where it was imagined he would have failed, he triumphed. The fame of all these doings flew into Ayrshire.—"There is a great rumor here," said one of his friends, "concerning your intimacy with the Duchess of Gordon; I am really told that

'Cards to invite fly by thousands each night;'

and if you had one, I suppose there would be also 'bribes for your old secretary.' It seems that you are resolved to make hay while the sun shines, a good maxim to thrive by; you seemed to despise it while in this country, but probably some philosopher in Edinburgh has taught you better sense."

Of his own feelings on these occasions the Poet has said but little: Lord Monboddo's table had other attractions than wine called Falernian, and dishes like those praised in Latin verse. The beauty of his daughter is celebrated by Burns both in prose and poetry—

"Fair Burnet strikes the adoring eye,
Heaven's beauties on my fancy shine;
I see the Sire of Love on high,
And own his work indeed divine."

"I enclose you," he says to his friend Chalmers, "two poems, which I have carded and spun since I passed Glenbuck. One blank in the Address to Edinburgh 'Fair B—' is the heavenly Miss Burnet, daughter of Lord Monboddo, at whose house I have had the honor to be more than once. There has not been any thing nearly like her in all the combinations of beauty, grace, and goodness, the great Creator has formed since Milton's Eve, on the first day of her existence."

Those who were afraid that amid feasting and flattery —the smiles of ladies and the applauding nods of their lords—Burns would forget himself, and allow the mercury of vanity to rise too high within him, indulged in idle fears. When he dined or supped with the magnates

of the land, he never wanted a monitor to warn him of the humility of his condition. When the company arose in the gilded and illuminated rooms, some of the fair guests—perhaps

> "Her grace,
> Whose flambeaux flash against the morning skies,
> And gild our chamber ceilings as they pass,"

took the hesitating arm of the Bard; went smiling to her coach, waved a graceful good-night with her jewelled hand, and, departing to her mansion, left him in the middle of the street to grope his way through the dingy alleys of the "gude town" to his obscure lodging, with his share of a deal table, a sanded floor, and a chaff bed, at eighteen pence a week. That his eyes were partly open to this we know; but he did not perceive that these invitations arose from a wish to relieve the ennui of a supper-table, where the guests were all too well-bred to utter any thing strikingly original or boldly witty. Had Burns beheld the matter in this light, he would have sprung up like Wat Tinlinn when touched with the elfin bodkin; and overturning silver dishes, garlanded decanters, and shoving opposing ladies and staring lords aside, made his way to the plough-tail, and recommenced turning the furrows upon his cold and ungenial farm of Mossgiel.—"I have formed many intimacies and friendships here," he observes, in a letter to Dr. Moore; "but I am afraid they are all of a too tender construction to bear carriage a hundred and fifty miles. To the rich, the great, the fashionable, the polite, I have no equivalent to offer; and I am afraid my meteor appearance will by no means entitle me to a settled correspondence with any of you, who are the permanent lights of genius and literature." In these words he expressed his fears: they were prophetic.

While his volume was passing through the press, he added "The Brigs of Ayr," the "Address to Edinburgh," and one or two songs and small pieces. The first poem, "The Brigs of Ayr," seems to have been written for the two-fold purpose of giving a picture of old times and new, and honoring in rhyme those who befriended him on the banks of Doon; and, like Ballantyne, to whom it is inscribed, had

> "Handed the rustic stranger up to fame."

There were two poems which some of his friends begged him to exclude from his new volume. On the score of delicacy, they requested the omission of "The Louse;" and on that of loyalty and propriety, "The Dream." He defended the former, because of the moral with which the poem concludes, and maintained the propriety of the latter whith such wit and indiscretion, that cautious divines and cool professors shrugged their shoulders, and talked of the folly of the sons of song. Mrs. Dunlop seems to have taken the matter much to heart.—"Your criticisms, madam," says the Poet, nettled a little by her remonstrance, "I understand very well, and could have wished to have pleased you better. You are right in your guess that I am not very amenable to counsel; I set as little by princes, lords, clergy, and critics, as all these respective gentry do by my bardship. I know what I may expect from the world by-and-bye—illiberal abuse, and, perhaps, contemptuous neglect."

In this sarcastic Dream there was much to amuse, and more to incense a king who endured advice as little as he did contradiction. The life of George the Third was pure and blameless; but the young princes of his house had already commenced their gay and extravagant courses. The song of the Bard is prophetic of the two elder ones:—

"For you, young Potentate of Wales,
I tell your Highness fairly,
Down pleasure's stream, wi' swelling sails,
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;
But some day ye may knaw your nails,
An' curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak Diana's pales,
Or rattled dice wi' Charlie.

"For you, Right Rev'rend Osnaburg,
Nane sets the lawn-sleeve sweeter,
Although a ribbon at your lug
Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown yon paughty dog
That bears the keys o' Peter,
Then swith! an' get a wife to hug,
Or trouth ye'll stain the mitre."

The "Address to Edinburgh" contains some noble verses. I have heard the description of the castle praised

by one; whose genius all but exempted him from error:—

"There, watching high, the least alarms
Thy rough rude fortress gleams afar,
Like some bold veteran, gray in arms,
And marked with many a seamy scar:
The ponderous wall and massy bar,
Grim-rising o'er the rugged rock,
Have oft withstood assailing War,
And oft repelled the invader's shock."

When Burns told Mrs. Dunlop that he was determined to flatter no created being, she might have smiled; for in his "Earnest Cry and Prayer," he scattered praise as profusely as ever he scattered corn over his new-turned furrows. He who could see Demosthenes and Cicero in half-a-dozen northern members of Parliment, was inclined to flatter. Dempster, Cunningham, the Campbells,—

"And ane, a chap that's damned auld-farran,
Dundas his name,"

were respectable debaters, but not eloquent. "Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie," came nearer to the comparison, and almost reconciles us to the lavish waste of honors on the others.

Burns' taste, which in all things resembled his genius, was almost always correct: he depended on its accuracy, and, as he used no words at random, was unwilling to alter aught. In the "Cotter's Saturday Night" he called Wallace the "unhappy," in allusion to his fate; he hesitated now to change the word to "undaunted," in compliance with the criticism of Mrs. Dunlop.—"Your friendly advice," he says to that lady, "I will not give it the cold name of criticism, I receive with reverence. I have made some small alterations in what I before had printed. I have the advice of some very judicious friends among the literati here: but with them I sometimes find it necessary to claim the privilege of thinking for myself. The noble Earl of Glencairn, to whom I owe more than to any man, does me the honor of giving me his strictures; his hints, with respect to impropriety or indelicacy, I follow implicitly."

During the spring he sat to Alexander Nasmyth for

his portrait; it was engraved by Beugo, whose boast it was that he had added to the merit of the likeness by inducing Burns to give him a sitting or two while he touched up the plate. He also allowed his profile to be taken in small: the brow is low, the hair hangs over it, and there is a short queue behind. The portrait by Nasmyth is the best, though wanting a little in massive vigor and the look of inspiration. He sat to whoever desired him, nor seemed to be aware that genius went to such works as well as to the manufacture of rhyme. He took pleasure in presenting proof impressions of this portrait to his friends: sometimes the gift was accompanied by verse, and it has been remarked that he imagined he looked very well on paper, and expected some notice to be taken of his face as well as of his poetry.

Of his verse, indeed, the notice was not always taken that he desired. On the death of Dundas, of Arniston, Lord President of the Court of Session, he wrote a "Lamentation," forty lines in length. There are vigorous passages; the Poet affects an excess of grief; he complains to the hills, the plains, and the tempests of the too early removal of one who redressed wrongs, restrained violence, defeated fraud, and protected innocence. He copied the poem into a volume now before me, and presented it to Dr. Geddes, with the following note, describing the success of his "Lamentation."—"The foregoing poem has some tolerable lines in it, but the incurable wound of my pride will not suffer me to correct or even peruse it. I sent a copy of it with my best prose letter to the son of the great man, the theme of the piece, by the hands, too, of one of the noblest men in God's world, Alex. Wood, surgeon; when, behold! his solicitorship took no more notice of my poem or me than I had been a strolling fiddler who had made free with his lady's name over the head of a silly new reel! Did he think I looked for any dirty gratuity?"

Some of the anecdotes related of the Poet and his proof-sheets are amusing enough. When he had made up his mind to retain a line in the words of its original inspiration—such as, "When I look back on prospects drear,"—he stated his reasons briefly for refusing to make any

change, and then sat, like his own heroine, "deaf as Ailsa Craig" to all persuasion or remonstrance. Nor did he lose his serenity of mind, though the way in which he unconsciously, perhaps, crumbled up the sheet in his hand till he almost made it illegible, showed what was passing within him. It was on one of these occasions that a clergyman, stung with the irreverent way that Burns had handled the cloth in some of his earlier pieces, hazarded some stern remarks on the "Holy Fair;" not, he said, but that the poem was a clever picture, he only wished to show that it was not constructed according to the true rules of composition. The reverend censor did not acquit himself well in his perilous undertaking: the eye of the Poet began to lighten, and his lips to give a sort of twitching announcement that something sarcastic was coming. All present looked towards him; he spoke as they expected, saying, "No, by heaven, I'll not touch him—

'Dulness is sacred in a sound divine.'

—"I'll find you as apt a quotation as that," said the aggressor, "and from a poet whom I love more—

'Corbies and Clergy are a shot right kittle.'"

Burns laughed, held out his hand, saying, "Then we are friends again."

He did not always come off so happily: on another occasion, Cromek tells us, that at a breakfast where a number of the literati were present, a critic, one of those fond of seeming very acute and wise, undertook to prove that Gray's Elegy in a Country Church-yard violated the essential rules of verse, and transgressed against true science, to which he held true poetry to be amenable. He failed, however, in explaning the nature of his scientific gauge, and he also failed in quoting the lines correctly, which he proposed to censure; upon which Burns exclaimed with great vehemence, "Sir, you have proved enough—you have proved that a man may be a good judge of poetry by square and rule, and, after all, a profound blockhead."

One of those critical scenes is well described by Professor Walker, who happened to be present, it occurred at the table of Dr. Blair, who was fond of hearing the Poet read

his own verses.—"The aversion of Burns," he observes, "to adopt alterations which were proposed to him, after having fully satisfied his own taste, is apparent from his letters. In one passage, he says that he never accepted any of the corrections of the Edinburgh Literati, except in the instance of a single word. If his admirers should be desirous to know this 'single word,' I am able to gratify them, as I happened to be present when the criticism was made. It was at the table of a gentleman of literary celebrity, who observed, that in two lines of the 'Holy Fair,' beginning—

'For Moodie speels the holy door,
Wi' tidings of salvation.'

The last word, from his description of the preacher, ought to be *damnation*. This change, both embittering the satire, and introducing a word to which Burns had no dislike, met with his instant enthusiastic approbation. 'Excellent!' he exclaimed with great warmth, 'the alteration shall be made, and I hope you will allow me to say in a note, from whose suggestion it proceeds;' a request which the critic with great good humor, but with equal decision, refused." The Poet had not yet discovered what was due to clerical decorum. I must copy another of Professor Walker's pictures of the Poet and the Edinburgh Literati:—

"The day after my introduction to Burns," says the Professor, "I supped in company with him at Dr. Blair's. The other guests were very few: and as each had been invited chiefly to have an opportunity of meeting with the Poet, the Doctor endeavoured to draw him out, and make him the central figure of the groupe. Though he, therefore, furnished the greatest proportion of the conversation, he did no more than what he saw evidently was expected. Men of genius have often been taxed with a proneness to commit blunders in company, from that ignorance or negligence of the laws of conversation which must be imputed to the absorption of their thoughts on a favorite subject, or to the want of that daily practice in attending to the petty modes of behaviour which is incompatible with a studious life. From singularities of this sort, Burns was

unusually free: yet, on the present occasion, he made a more awkward slip than any that are reported of the poets or mathematicians most noted for absence. Being asked from which of the public places he had received the greatest gratification, he named the high church, but gave the preference as a preacher to (the Rev. Robert Walker) the colleague (and most formidable rival) of our worthy entertainer—whose celebrity rested on his pulpit eloquence—in a tone so pointed and decisive as to throw the whole company into the most foolish embarrassment. The Doctor, indeed, with becoming self-command, endeavoured to relieve the rest by cordially seconding the encomium so injudiciously introduced: but this did not prevent the conversation from laboring under that compulsory effort which was unavoidable, while the thoughts of all were full of the only subject on which it was improper to speak. Of this blunder Burns must instantly have been aware, but he showed the return of good sense by making no attempt to repair it. His secret mortification was indeed so great, that he never mentioned the circumstance until many years after, when he told me that his silence had proceeded from the pain which he felt in recalling it to his memory."

It must be mentioned to the honor of Blair, that this mortifying blunder had no influence over his well-regulated mind, and that he appears from his correspondence to have augmented rather than lessened his kindness for the Poet; but the strong sense of propriety which is visible in all that Blair ever said or wrote preserved him from this: though he probably thought of the Poet's preference when he first saw the fragment beginning,

"When Guildford good our pilot stood;"

and said, "Burns' politics always smell of the smithy." The Bard disapproved of the war waged with America; the world at large has shared in his feelings, and the sarcasm of the Doctor falls harmless on this little hasty, though not very happy production. It was likely to Blair that Burns glanced when, in reply to the question if the critical literati of Edinburgh had aided him with their opinions,—"The best of these gentlemen," said he, "are like

the wife's daughter in the west—they spin the thread of their criticism so fine, that it is fit for neither warp nor waft." He was never at a loss for illustrations drawn from domestic life or rural affairs.

Towards the close of April the subscription volume

"On wings of winds came flying all abroad,"

and was widely and warmly welcomed. All that coterie influence and individual exertion— all that the noblest or the humblest could do, was done to aid in giving it a kind reception; Creech, too, had announced it through the booksellers of the land, and it was soon diffused over the country, over the colonies, and wherever the language was spoken. The literary men of the south seemed even to fly a flight beyond those of the north. Some hesitated not to call him the northern Shakspeare; criticism at that period had not usurped the throne, and assumed the functions of genius; reviews were few in number, and moderate in influence, and followed opinion rather than led it. Had he lived in a latter day, with what a triumphant air of superiority the two leading critical journals would have crushed him! They would have agreed in that, though in nothing else, to trample down a spirit which wrote not as they wrote, and felt not as they felt; they would have assumed the air of high philosophy and searching science, and buried him as he did the Daisy under the weight of a deep-drawn critical furrow. The Whig of the north would have pounced on his poetical jacobitism; the Tory of the south upon his love of freedom; and both would have tossed him to the meaner hounds of the kennel of criticism after they had dissected the soul and heart out of him. Much of this these journals tried to do at a later period when the Poet was low in the dust, and his fame as high as Heaven, and beyond their rancor or their spite.

While Burns lodged with his Mauchline friend Richmond, he kept good hours and sober company. In the course of the spring he became acquainted with William Nicol, one of the masters of the High-school, who lived in the Buccleugh-road, and found more suitable accommodation under his roof. This has been considered as a

symptom that the keeping of good hours was growing irksome. The poverty of the Poet made him live frugally, nay, meanly, when he arrived in Edinburgh; but when money came pouring in, and gentlemen of note called on him, it did not become him to remain in an apartment of which he had but a share. I see little harm in this, or proof of increasing irregularity. Nicol, it is true, was of a quick, fierce temper—loose and wavering in religious opinions—fond of social company, and now and then indulged in excesses, though his situation required sobriety. Lockhart, who charges the imputed irregularities of Burns on the example of Nicol, supports his conclusion by the testimony of Heron. But Heron is a doubtful evidence; he was himself not only inclined to gross sensual indulgence, but has been regarded as one not at all solicitous about the truth.—"The enticements of pleasure," says Heron, "too often unman our virtuous resolution, even while we wear the air of rejecting them with a stern brow. We resist, and resist, and resist; but at last suddenly turn and embrace the enchantress. The bucks of Edinburgh accomplished, in regard to Burns, that in which the boors of Ayrshire had failed. After residing some months in Edinburgh, he began to estrange himself, not altogether, but in some measure, from graver friends. Too many of his hours were now spent at the tables of persons who delighted to urge conviviality to drunkenness." Heron knew not what resolutions Burns formed, nor how much he resisted; and to push conviviality to intoxication was common in those days at the tables of the gentlemen of the north. The entertainer set down the quantity to be drunk, locked the door, put the key in his pocket, and the guests had either to swallow all his wine, or fill the landlord tipsy, steal the key, and escape.

Though Burns had expressed doubts to Lord Buchan on the prudence of a pennyless poet visiting the battle-fields, and fine natural scenery of Scotland, and intimated to many of his friends his resolution to return to the plough, he longed to pull broom on the Cowden-knowes, look at the Birks on the Braes of Yarrow, and see whether Flora smiled as sweetly on the Tweed as Crawford had

represented. On the third of May, he wrote to Dr. Blair —"I leave Edinburgh to-morrow morning, but could not go without troubling you with half a line, sincerely to thank you for the kindness, patronage, and friendship which you have shown me." The Doctor answered the farewell at once, and his words weigh those of Heron to the dust.—"Your situation was indeed very singular; and, being brought out all at once from the shades of deepest privacy to so great a share of public notice and observation, you had to stand a severe trial. I am happy you have stood it so well; and, as far as I have known or heard, though in the midst of many temptations, without reproach to your character and behaviour. You are now, I presume, to retire to a more private walk of life, and I trust you will conduct yourself there with industry, prudence, and honor. You have laid the foundation for just public esteem. In the midst of those employments which your situation will render proper, you will not, I hope, neglect to promote that esteem by cultivating your genius, and attending to such productions of it, as may raise your character still higher. At the same time, be not in too great haste to come forward. Take time and leisure to improve and mature your talents; for, on any second production you give the world, your fate, as a poet, will very much depend." Burns, it is said, received this letter when about to mount his horse on his Border excursion; he read as far as I have transcribed, then crumpled up the communication, and thrusting it into his pocket, exclaimed, "Kindly said, Doctor; but a man's first-born book is often like his first-born babe—healthier and stronger than those which follow." In this mood he quitted Edinburgh, after a residence of five months and some odd days.

Burns was accompanied in this tour by Robert Ainslie, a young gentleman of talents and education, whose friendship his genius had procured, and who is still living to enjoy the esteem and some of the applause of the world. The Poet directed his course by Lammermoor—whose hills he pronounced dreary in general, but at times picturesque—through Peebles, where he chaunted a stave of the old song of "The Wife of Peebles;" passed Cold-

stream, where he thought of Monk, and his "reformadoe saints," and from Lanton-Edge gazed on the Merse, which he pronounced "glorious."

Of this tour, Burns kept a journal; it is now before me: the entries are brief, but generally to the point.—"May 6. Reach Berrywell; old Mr. Ainslie an uncommon character; his hobbies, agriculture, natural philosophy, and politics. In the first, he is unexceptionably the clearest-headed, best informed man I ever met with; in the other two, very intelligent. Mrs. Ainslie, an excellent, sensible, cheerful, amiable woman. Miss Ainslie, her person a little *en bon point*, but handsome, her face particularly; her eyes full of sweetness and good humor. She unites three qualities rarely to be found together: keen penetration, sly witty observation and remark, and the gentlest, most unaffected female modesty." Here he met with the author of "The Maid that tends the Goats," of whom he says,—"Mr. Dudgeon, a poet at times, a worthy, remarkable character, natural penetration, a great deal of information, some genius, and extreme modesty." In the pulpit of Dunse church he found a character of another stamp.—"Dr. Bowmaker, a man of strong lungs and pretty judicious remark," who preached a sermon against "obstinate sinners." "I am found out," whispered the Poet to a friend, "wherever I go."

On reaching the Tweed, Ainslie requested Burns to pass the stream, that he might say he had been in England. The following brief entry is all the memoranda he makes of this event:—"Coldstream—went over to England—glorious river Tweed, clear and majestic." His companion has enabled me to complete the picture.—"As soon as the Poet reached the English side he took off his hat, knelt down, and with extreme emotion, and a countenance rapt and inspired, prayed for, and blest Scotland, by pronouncing aloud the two concluding verses of "The Cotter's Saturday Night." At Lenel-House he drank tea with Brydone the traveller; of this he makes a brief record. "Mr. Brydone is a man of an excellent heart, kind, joyous, and benevolent; but from his situation, past and present, an admirer of every thing that bears a splendid title, or that possesses a large estate; Mrs. Brydone,

a most elegant woman in her person and manners; the tones of her voice remarkably sweet." He slept at Coldstream, and then proceeded to Kelso, of which he pronounced the situation charming.—"There are," said he, "enchanting views and prospects on both sides of the river, particularly the Scotch side."

He walked on to the ruins of Roxburgh Castle; and wrote in his journal:—"A holly-bush growing where James II. of Scotland was accidentally killed by the bursting of a cannon. A small old religious ruin, and a fine old garden planted by the religious, rooted out and destroyed by an English Hottentot, a *maitre d'hotel* of the duke's, a Mr. Cole. Climate and soil of Berwickshire, and even Roxburghshire, superior to Ayrshire; turnip and sheep husbandry their great improvements. Mr. M'Dowal of Caverton Mill, sold his sheep, ewe, and lamb together, at two guineas a piece. They wash their sheep before shearing; seven or eight pounds of washen wool in a fleece. Low markets, consequently low rents; fine lands not above sixteen shillings a Scotch acre; magnificence of farmers and farm-houses." On his way up the Teviot and the Jed, he visited an old gentleman, whose boast it was that he possessed an arm-chair which had belonged to Thomson the poet. Burns reverently examined the relique, could scarcely be prevailed to sit in it, and seemed to feel inspiration from its touch.

In Jedburgh, the Poet found much to interest him.—"Go about two miles out of the town to a group of parks; meet a polite soldier-like gentleman, a Captain Rutherford, who had been many years in the wilds of America, a prisoner among the Indians. Charming romantic situation of Jedburgh, with gardens and orchards intermingled among the houses. Fine old ruins; a once magnificent cathedral and strong castle. All the towns here have the appearance of old rude grandeur, but the people extremely idle. Jed, a fine romantic little river." Burns dined with Captain Rutherford; returned to Jedburgh. was introduced to Mr. Potts, writer, whom he pronounced a clever man; and to Mr. Somerville, the minister of the place; "a man," said he, "and a gentleman, but sadly addicted to punning."

Here he met with something not unlike a love adventure: in one of his walks he was accompanied by several ladies:—"Miss Hope, a pretty girl, fond of laughing and fun; Miss Lindsay, a good-humored, amiable girl, handsome, and extremely graceful; beautiful hazel eyes full of spirit, and sparkling with delicious moisture; an engaging face, *un tout ensemble*, that speaks her of the first order of female minds; her sister, a bonnie, strappan, rosy, sonsie lass." The Poet would, perhaps, have contented himself with silently admiring this dangerous companion; but two venerable spinsters persecuted him so with their conversation, that he took refuge with Miss Lindsay, who was touched, as he imagined, with his attentions.—"My heart," he says in his record, "is thawed into melting pleasure after being so long frozen up in the Greenland bay of indifference, amid the noise and nonsense of Edinburgh. *Nota Bene.*—The Poet within a point and a half of being damnably in love; I am afraid my bosom is still nearly as much tinder as ever; I find Miss Lindsay would soon play the devil with me." He seems ready to burst into song as he proceeds with his journal.—"Took farewell of Jedburgh with some melancholy, disagreeable sensations. Jed, pure be thy chrystal streams and hallowed thy sylvan banks! Sweet Isabella Lindsay, may peace dwell in thy bosom uninterrupted, except by the tumultuous throbbings of rapturous love! That love-enkindling eye must beam on another, not on me: that graceful form must bless another's arms, not mine." Before he departed, he gave this young lady a present of his portrait, and was waited on by the magistrates and handsomely presented with the freedom of the town.

He made an excursion to Wauchope, to see his fair correspondent, Mrs. Scott; the laird, he said, was shrewd in his farming matters, and frequently stumbled in conversation on a strong, rather than a good thing; the lady had sense, taste, and a decision peculiar to female authors.—"Kelso; dine with the Farmer's Club; all gentlemen talking of high matters; each of them keeps a hunter, from thirty to fifty pounds value, and attends the fox-huntings in the county. Go out with Mr. Ker, one of

the club, and a friend of Mr. Ainslie's, to lie; Mr. Ker, a most gentlemanly, clever fellow; a widower, with some fine children; his mind and manner astonishingly like my dear old friend, Robert Muir, in Kilmarnock; he offers to accompany me on my English tour: dine with Sir Alexander Don; clever, but far from being a match for his divine lady."

On the thirteenth of May, Burns visited Dryburgh Abbey, and though the weather was wild, spent an hour among the ruins, since hallowed by the dust of Scott; he crossed the Leader, and went up the Tweed to Melrose, which he calls a "far-famed glorious ruin." Though desirous of musing on battle-fields, he seems to have left Ancram-moor unheeded; nor did he pause to look at the spot where

> "Gallant Cessford's heart-blood dear
> Reeked on dark Elliot's border spear."

He sat for some time, indeed, among the broom of the Cowden-knowes, and had a chat with the Souters of Selkirk, concerning the field of Flodden; but no one seems to have told him of Huntly-burn, where True Thomas flirted with the Fairy Queen; nor of Philiphaugh, where Montrose and his cavaliers were routed by Lesly; nor of Carterhaugh, made memorable in song by the fine ballad of Tamlane. He was not in a pastoral mood; for he says briefly, "The whole country hereabouts, both on Tweed and Ettrick, remarkably stony." In the inspiration necessary for verse, there is none of the spirit of prophecy: he passed over some broken ground and peat-haggs, where his mare, Jenny Geddes, kept her feet with difficulty, unconscious that on that desolate spot the Towers of Abbotsford would, ere long, arise, and those immortal Romances be written, which have made his own the second name in Scottish literature.

The weather having settled, the Poet visited Inverleithing, where, says he, I dined and drank some "Galloway whey," and saw Elibanks and Elibraes on the other side of the Tweed. In the morning he continued his journey and found other places made famous in tale and song.—"Dine at a country inn, kept by a miller in

Earlston, the birth-place and residence of the celebrated Thomas the Rhymer, and saw the ruins of his castle." He now shaped his course to Dunse, where he met "the Rev. Mr. Smith, a famous punster, and Mr. Meikle, a celebrated mechanic, and inventor of the threshing-mills." Berwick he looked on as "an idle town, rudely picturesque." At Eyemouth, he loved the look of the sea and shore so much, that he took a sail after dinner; here he was made a royal arch mason of St. Abb's lodge.—"Sir James Hall of Dunglass, having heard," he says, "of my being in the neighbourhood, comes to Mr. Sheriffs to breakfast; takes me to see his fine scenery on the stream of Dunglass. Dunglass, the most romantic, sweet place I ever saw. Sir James and his lady, a pleasant happy couple; he points out a walk, for which he has an uncommon respect, as it was made by an aunt of his to whom he owes much." Burns seems to have fallen into something of a cynical mood on leaving the author of the ingenious work on the "Origin of Gothic Architecture." A lady, of whose charms and conversation he was no admirer, resolved to accompany him to Dunbar; the description is severe and clever.—"She mounts an old cart-horse, as huge and lean as a house; a rusty old side-saddle without girth or stirrup, but fastened on with an old pillion-girth; herself as fine as hands could make her, in cream-colored riding clothes, hat and feather, &c. I, ashamed of my situation, ride like the devil, and almost shake her to pieces."

On reaching Dunbar he notes in his journal—"Passed through the most glorious corn country I ever saw. Dine with Provost Fall, an eminent merchant; Mrs. Fall a genius in painting; clever in the arts and sciences, without a consummate assurance of her own abilities." The sarcastic humor of the Poet continues: he meets a lady—"a clever woman, but no brent new; with tolerable pretensions to remark and wit, while time had blown the blushing blood of bashful modesty into the full-blossomed flower of easy confidence." He likewise meets "a fellow whose looks are of that kind which deceived me in a gentleman at Kelso, and has often deceived me; a goodly, handsome figure and face, which incline one to

give them credit for parts which they have not." The cloud now begins to pass away. "In good time comes an antidote;" he reached Dunse, and "found Miss Ainslie, the amiable, the sensible, the good-humored and sweet Miss Ainslie, all alone at Berrywell. How well-bred, how frank, how good she is! Charming Rachel! may thy bosom never be wrung by the evils of this life of sorrows, or by the villany of this world's sons!"

Burns was now joined by Mr. Ker, and set off on a jaunt into England; sudden illness seized him by the way; the entry in his journal is characteristic.—"I am taken extremely ill, with strong feverish symptoms, and have a servant to watch me all night. Embittering remorse scares my fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death. I am determined to live for the future in such a manner as not to be scared at the approach of Death: I am sure I could meet Him with indifference, but for the something beyond the grave." He recovered his health and spirits, and went to see the roup of an unfortunate farmer's stock. He surveyed the scene with a darkening brow and a troubled eye.—"Rigid economy, and decent industry," he said, "do you preserve me from being the principal *dramatis persona* in such a scene of horror. This day I feel myself warm with sentiments of gratitude to the great Preserver of men, who has kindly restored me to health and strength." He now recommenced his tour.

"*Sunday, May* 27.—Cross Tweed, and traverse the moors, through a wild country, till I reach Alnwick-Castle. Monday—Come through bye-ways to Warkworth, where we dine. Warkworth, situated very picturesque with Coquet Island, a small rocky spot, the seat of an old monastery, facing it a little in the sea; and the small but romantic river Coquet running through it. Sleep at Morpeth, a pleasant-enough little town, and on next day to Newcastle." The Poet seems to have found little in Newcastle to interest him: tradition says, that at dinner he was startled at seeing the meat served before the soup. "This," said his facetious entertainer, "is in obedience to a Northumberland maxim, which enjoins us to eat the beef before we sup the broth, lest the hungry Scotch make an inroad and snatch it." Burns laughed heartily. On leaving New-

castle he rode through Hexham, and on to Longtown, which he reached on a hiring day.—"I am uncommonly happy," he says, "to see so many young folks enjoying life." Here he parted with his friend Ker; and, arriving at Carlisle, sat down and gave a brief account of his jaunt, to his friend Nicol, in very particular Scotch; saying, in conclusion, "I'll be in Dumfries the morn, gif the beast be to the fore, an' the branks bide hale. God be wi' you, Willie. Amen."

From Carlisle he went along the coast to Annan and Dumfries.—"I am quite charmed," he says, "with Dumfries folk. Mr. Burnside, the clergyman, in particular, is a man whom I shall ever gratefully remember; and his wife—simplicity, elegance, good sense, and good humor, are the constituents of her manner and heart." Burns next proceeded to Dalswinton, and walked over the unoccupied farms; but, though he expressed himself pleased with the land and the general aspect of the valley, he declined for the time the handsome offer of a four-nineteen years' lease on his own terms; and, saying he would return in autumn, departed. "From my view of the lands," he said in a letter to Nicol, "and Mr. Millar's reception of my bardship, my hopes in that business are rather mended, but still they are but slender."

The friends of Burns considered this an agricultural rather than a poetic tour. It partook of the nature of both; remarks on varieties of soil; rotation of crops; and on land, pastoral or cultivated, mingle curiously with sketches of personal character, notices of visits paid to hoary ruins, or to scenes memorable in song. His curiosity was excited: his heart a little touched, but neither the fine scenery, nor the lovely women, produced any serious effect on his muse. The sole poetic fruit of the excursion is an Epistle to Creech, dated Selkirk, May 13, and written, he says, "Nearly extempore, in a solitary inn, after a miserable wet day's riding." It is, in its nature, complimentary; the dripping sky, and "the worst inn's worst room," induced the Poet to make light of

> "The Eden scenes on crystal Jed,
> And Ettrick banks, now roaring red,"

and think of the wit and the wine of Edinburgh, and see in imagination, philosophers, poets,

> "And toothy critics by the score,
> In bloody row,"

crowding to the levee of the patronizing bibliopole.

After an absence of six busy, and to him eventful, months, Burns returned to Mossgiel the 8th of June, 1787. His mother, a woman of few words, met him with tears of joy in her eyes at the threshold, saying, "Oh, Robert!" He had left her hearth in the darkness of night, and he came back in the brightness of day; he went away an obscure and almost nameless adventurer, and he returned with a name, round which there was already a halo not destined soon to be eclipsed. In his own eyes, his early aspirations after fame seemed as hopeless as "the blind groping of Homer's Cyclops round the walls of his cave;" he had now made his way to the mountain-top, his pipe was at his lips, and all the country round was charmed with his melody. The last lines which he expected to measure in Caledonia were not yet uttered, and he who, to use his own words, was lately

> "Darkling derned in glens and hallows,
> And hunted, as was William Wallace,
> By constables, these blackguard fallows,
> And bailies baith,"

was now a poet of the highest order; the fit and accepted companion of the proud and the lordly, with gold, the fruits of his genius, in his pocket, and more promised by the muse. Those who formerly were cold or careless, now approached to praise and to welcome him; while his mother, who never imagined that aught good could come from idle rhyme, received all as something dropt from heaven, and rejoiced in the fame of her son.

He remained at home some ten or twelve days. He went little out. His acquaintance with Jean Armour was not at that time renewed, nor did he visit more than one one friend or two; his chief occupation was in writing to his literary acquaintances, and discussing with his brother Gilbert the chances of success in agriculture. He was restless—he was not satisfied with his position in society; he neither belonged to the high nor to the low. Rank,

he felt, had taken his hand coldly to squeeze and to drop it, while his rustic brethren looked upon him as having risen above their condition. The feelings which agitated him are forcibly—nay, darkly, expressed in a letter to Nicol, dated Mauchline, June 18:—"I never, my friend, thought mankind very capable of any thing generous; but the stateliness of the patricians in Edinburgh, and the servility of my plebeian brethren since I returned home, have nearly put me out of conceit altogether with my species. I have bought a pocket Milton, which I carry perpetually about with me, in order to study the sentiments—the dauntless magnanimity—the intrepid unyielding independence—the desperate, daring, and noble defiance of hardship in that great personage Satan. 'Tis true I have just now a little cash; but I am afraid the star that hitherto has shed its malignant purpose-blasting rays full in my zenith—that noxious planet, so baleful in its influence to the rhyming trade, I much dread it is not yet beneath my horizon. Misfortune clogs the path of human life; the poetic mind finds itself miserably deranged in, and unfit for, the walks of business. Add to all that, thoughtless follies and hare-brained whims, like so many *ignes fatui*, eternally diverging from the right line of sober discretion, sparkle with step-bewitching blaze in the idly-gazing eyes of the poor heedless bard, till pop 'he falls, like Lucifer, never to hope again.'" In this mood he left Mauchline, and hurried to Edinburgh.

In some of the doings of Burns during the latter half of the year 1787, we see a mind "unfitted with an aim;" he moved much about without any visible purpose in his motions. We have now to follow him northward in three successive and hurried excursions, in which he passed into the Western Highlands, examined Stirlingshire, and penetrated eastward as far as Inverness. In his first tour he was mounted on Jenny Geddes, named after the devout virago who threw a stool at the Dean of Edinburgh's head —perhaps the lady celebrated in song:—

"Jenny Geddes was the gossip
Put the gown upon the Bishop."

Of this journey we know little that is pleasant. Burns seems to have been possessed with a spirit of ill-humor

during the greater part of the expedition. He first bent his steps to Carron, and, desiring to see the celebrated Foundry, was repulsed from the gate, rudely as he thought; for he put his complaint into no very decorous language :—

"We came na' here to view your warks
In hopes to be mair wise,
But only, lest we gang to hell,
It might be nae surprise."

He then proceeded to Stirling. The Poet was an intense lover of his country and her glory : the displeasure with which the people of Scotland regarded the Union which had removed all visible symbols of power and independence, was not in those days subsided; and, when he looked on the Hall where princes once ruled and Scottish parliaments assembled, and reflected that it was laid in ruins by a prince of the house of Hanover, he gave vent to his proper indignation in improper verse :—

"Here Stuarts once in glory reigned,
And laws for Scotland's weal ordained;
But now unroofed their palace stands,
Their sceptre's swayed by other hands;
The injured Stuart line is gone,
A race outlandish fills their throne."

Two other lines followed, forming the bitter point to the epigram—they were remembered in after-days to the Poet's injury. He seems not to have been very sensible at that time of his imprudence;—for some one said, "Burns, this will do you no good."—"I shall reprove myself," he said; and wrote these aggravating words :

"Rash mortal, and slanderous poet, thy name
Shall no longer appear in the records of fame;
Dost not know that old Mansfield, who writes like the Bible,
Says the more 'tis a truth, Sir, the more 'tis a libel?"

Such satire was not likely to pass without remonstrance : Hamilton, of Gladsmuir, wrote a reply, wherein he lamented that a mind,

"Where Genius lights her brightest fires,"

should disdain truth, and law, and justice ;

"And skulking with a villain's aim,
Thus basely stab his monarch's fame."

There are few who will not concur in the propriety of

this rebuke. The writer, however, resolved to be prophet, as well as poet and priest:—

> "Yes, Burns, 'tis o'er—thy race is run,
> And shades receive thy setting sun:
> These few rash lines shall damn thy name,
> And blast thy hopes of future fame."

Poetic sarcasms on ruling powers may keep a man from rising in the church where princes are patrons, but they have no influence on his ascent up Parnassus: of this no one was more aware than Burns, nor was he long at a loss for an answer to the minister of Gladsmuir,

> "Like Esop's lion, Burns says, sore I feel
> All others scorn—but damn that ass's heel."

After leaving Stirling, we hear no more of him till, having traversed a portion of the Western Highlands, and passed through Inverary, he makes his appearance at Arrochar, and thus addresses Ainslie: "I write you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains; thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants. My last stage was Inverary—to-morrow night's stage, Dunbarton." This was on the 28th of June. At Inverary, he found the principal inn filled by a visiting party to the Duke of Argyle, who engrossed all the attention of the landlord; and the poor Bard, mounted on a sorry mare, without friend or lackey, was neglected. He avenged himself with unmerited bitterness:—

> "Whoe'er he be who sojourns here,
> I pity much his case,
> Unless he's come to wait upon
> The lord, their god, his Grace:
> There's naething here but Highland pride,
> But Highland cauld and hunger;
> If Providence has sent me here
> 'Twas surely in his anger."

If the Poet wrote these lines on the window of the inn, he must have administered the spur at his departure with little mercy to the sides of Jenny Geddes; for Highland wrath is as hot as Highland hospitality.

Burns recovered his composure of mind before reaching Dumbarton; he had, moreover, fallen into very pleasant

company. Having dined with a hospitable Highland gentleman, he was introduced to a merry party.—"Our dancing," says the Bard, "was none of the French or English insipid formal movements. The ladies sung Scotch songs like angels; then we flew at 'Bab at the bowster,' 'Tullochgorum,' 'Loch-Erroch side,' &c., like midges sporting in the mottie sun. When the dear lasses left us, we ranged round the bowl till the good-fellow hour of six; except a few minutes that we went to pay our devotions to the glorious lamp of day peering over the towering top of Benlomond. We all kneeled. Our worthy landlord's son held the bowl, each man a full glass in his hand, and I, as priest, repeated some rhyming nonsense: like Thomas the Rhymer's prophecies, I suppose."

These Highland high-jinks were not yet concluded. After a few hours' sleep—a good dinner at another good fellow's house, Burns mounted his mare, and, accompanied by two friends, rode along Lochlomond side on his way to Dumbarton.—"We found ourselves," he says "'no very fou, but gaily yet,' and I rode soberly, till by came a Highlandman at the gallop, on a tolerably good horse, but which had never known the ornaments of iron or leather. We scorned to be out-galloped by a Highlandman, so off we started, whip-and-spur. My companions fell sadly a-stern; but my old mare, Jenny Geddes, one of the Rosinante family, strained past the Highlandman, in spite of all his efforts with the hair-halter. Just as I was passing him, Donald wheeled his horse, as if to cross before me to mar my progress, when down came his horse, and threw his rider's breekless bottom in a clipt hedge, and down came Jenny Geddes over all, and my bardship between her and the Highlandman's horse. Jenny trod over me with cautious reverence. As for the rest of my acts and my wars, and all my wise sayings, and why my mare was called Jenny Geddes, they shall be recorded, in a few weeks, in the chronicles of your memory."

Burns returned to Mauchline by the way of Glasgow, and remained with his mother during the month of July. He renewed his intercourse with the family of the Armours. Jean's heart still beat tenderly towards "the

plighted husband of her youth;" and Burns, much as his pride was wounded, could not help regarding her with affection. He had, as yet, no very defined notion of what he should do in the world: he trusted to time and chance. "I have yet fixed," he thus writes to a friend, "on nothing with respect to the serious business of life. I am just as usual—a rhyming, mason-making, raking, aimless fellow. However, I shall somewhere have a farm soon —I was going to say a wife, too; but that must never be my blessed lot. I am but a younger son of the house of Parnassus; and, like other younger sons of great families, I may intrigue, if I choose to run all risks, but must not marry."

It is plain that Burns regarded the burning of his marriage lines as not only destroying all evidence of his engagements with Jean Armour, but as a deliberate revocation of vows on her part which released him from the responsibilities of wedlock. Nay, this seems to have been the notion of graver men. The Poet thus writes to David Bryce, 17th July, 1786:—"Poor Jean is come back to Mauchline. I went to call for her, but her mother forbade me the house. I have already appeared publicly in church, and was indulged in the liberty of standing in my own seat. I do this to get a certificate as a bachelor, which Mr. Auld has promised me." In this I see the anxiety of Mr. Armour to obliterate all traces of the marriage, and the concurrence, at least, of the Poet in the proceeding. Robert Burns and Jean Armour might permit their friends to regard them as unmarried, and, if such was their own pleasure, call themselves single; but their children were not, I apprehend, affected in their claims to legitimacy by this disavowal on the part of their parents; the law would, I think, enforce their rights for them, in spite of the disclamation of both father and mother. Nay, I suspect the law refuses to recognise any other dissolution of wedlock than what is effected by civil or ecclesiastical authority. However this may be, the poet affected all the freedom of speech and action which custom concedes to bachelors, and seemed oftener than once on the point of unwittingly agitating the question, whether an Ayrshire lass or an Edinburgh lady, should plead a property in his hand.

The second excursion of Burns towards the north was made in the company of Dr. Adair, of Harrowgate, whom chance made into a comrade, and who fortunately kept the particulars of the journey in his memory. He set out early in August from Edinburgh, passed through Linlithgow, and made his appearance at the gates of Carron Foundry—they were opened with an apology for former rudeness, which mollified the bard; and he beheld in their tremendous furnaces and broiling labors a resemblance to the cavern of the Cyclops. A resemblance of a less classical kind had before occurred to him. From Carron he hurried to Stirling, that he might break and replace the pane of glass in the inn window on which he had written those rash and injurious lines already alluded to; and then he proceeded to visit Ramsay of Ochtertyre, whose romantic residence on the Teith he admired greatly, and whose conversation, rife as it was with knowledge of Scottish literature, was altogether after his own heart. This visit was brief, but full of interest. The laird of Ochtertyre had a memory filled with old traditions and old songs. He had written some ingenious essays on the olden poetry, displaying feeling and taste; and, moreover, the walls of his house were hung with long Latin inscriptions, much to the wonder of the unlearned Bard of Kyle.

They discussed fit topics for the muse, a rustic drama, and Scottish Georgics. "What beautiful landscapes of rural life and manners," says Ramsay, "might not have been expected from a pencil so faithful and forcible as his, which could have exhibited scenes as familiar and interesting as those in the Gentle Shepherd, which every one who knows our swains in their unadulterated state instantly recognizes as true to nature. But to have executed either of these plans, steadiness and abstraction from company were wanted, not genius." Of Burns' power of conversation, he says, "I have been in the company of many men of genius, some of them poets, but never witnessed such flashes of intellectual brightness as from him—the impulse of the moment—sparks of celestial fire." It is painful to think that the celestial sayings of the Poet have vanished from men's memories,

while the less mental and grosser things remain. He continued two days on the Teith, and then proceeded to Harvieston, where he was received with much respect and kindness by Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters. Here he saw Charlotte Hamilton for the first time.—"She is not only beautiful," he thus wrote to her brother Gavin, "but lovely. Her form is elegant, her features not regular, but they have the smile of sweetness, and the settled complacency of good nature in the highest degree; and her complexion, now that she has recovered her wonted health, is equal to Miss Burnet's. After the exercise of our riding to the Falls, Charlotte was exactly Dr. Donne's mistress:—

'Her pure and eloquent blood
Spoke in her cheeks, and so distinctly wrought,
That one would almost say her body thought.'

Her eyes are fascinating; at once expressive of good sense, tenderness, and a noble mind."

The account of Dr. Adair supplies some circumstances which Burns has omitted. "We made excursions," he says, "to various parts of the surrounding scenery, particularly Castle-Campbell, the ancient seat of the family of Argyle; and the famous cataract of the Devon, called the Cauldron Linn; and the Rumbling-Bridge, a single broad arch thrown by the devil, if tradition is to be believed, across the river at about the height of a hundred feet above its bed. A visit to Mrs. Bruce, of Clackmannan, a lady above ninety, the lineal descendant of that race which gave the Scottish throne its brightest ornament, interested his feelings powerfully. This venerable dame, with characteristic dignity, informed me, on my observing that I believed she was descended from the family of Robert Bruce, that Robert Bruce was sprung from her family. She was in possession of the hero's helmet and two-handed sword, with which she conferred on Burns and myself the honor of knighthood, observing that she had a better right to confer that title than *some people*.—Her political tenets were as Jacobitical as the Poet's, a conformity which contributed not a little to the cordiality of our reception. She gave us as her first toast after dinner, 'awa uncos', or away strangers; who these strangers

are, you will readily understand." At Dumfermline, on visiting the abbey church, the Poet persuaded Adair to represent a sinner on the stool of repentance, while he, in the character of priest, admonished him from the pulpit on the enormity of his transgression, and the frequency of its occurrence. In the churchyard he knelt down and kissed with much fervor the broad flag-stone which covered the grave of the great restorer of Scottish independence, Robert Bruce, and execrated the want of respect shown by the local authorities to the dust of the first of heroes. They returned to Edinburgh by the way of Kinross and Queensferry.

It was the complaint of the Harvieston ladies that Burns broke out into no poetic raptures on visiting the magnificence of the Cauldron-Linn, or the melancholy splendor of Castle-Campbell, and because he was next to silent, they concluded he had no taste for the picturesque. Other reasons may be assigned for the moderation of his raptures. He disliked to be tutored in matters of taste, and could not endure that one should run shouting before him whenever any fine object appeared. On one occasion of this kind, a lady at the Poet's side said, "Burns, have you nothing to say of this?"—"Nothing, madam," he replied, glancing at the leader of the party, "for an ass is braying over it." One evening, Lockhart relates, as the Poet passed near the Carron Foundry when the furnaces were casting forth flames, his companion exclaimed, "Look Burns, look! good heavens, look, look —what a glorious sight!"—"Sir," said the Bard, clapping spurs to Jenny Geddes, "I would not look! look! at your bidding, were it into the mouth of hell." When he visited Creehope-Linn, in Dumfrieshire, at every turn of the stream and bend of the wood he was called loudly upon to admire the shelving sinuosities of the burn, and the caverned splendor of its all but inaccessible banks—it was thought by those with him that he did not show rapture enough—"I could not admire it more sir," said the Poet, "if He who made it were to ask me to do it."

There were other reasons for the Poet being "so bashful and so grave" in the company of the Harvieston ladies. From his frequent praise in prose, from his admira-

tion in song, and the general tone of his conversation, I cannot avoid concluding that he thought more than favorably of Charlotte Hamilton. In the presence of female loveliness, Burns could see no landscape beauty; with Charlotte beside him, the Cauldron-Linn seemed an ordinary cascade, and Castle-Gloom not at all romantic. There is no positive evidence that he paid his addresses to the "Fairest Maid of Devon Banks;" but he did much to render himself acceptable, and as an oblique way of making his approach, he strove, and not without success, to merit the good opinion of her companion, Margaret Chalmers, a young lady of beauty as well as sense, now Mrs. Hay of Edinburgh. I can give but an imperfect account of the progress of the Poet's passion, for some twelve or fourteen of his most carefully written and gently expressed letters were, in an evil hour, thrown into the fire by Charlotte Hamilton, and all the record we have is his songs, and what is contained in his correspondence with Margaret Chalmers.

Of the lyrical lime-twigs which the Poet laid on the banks of the Devon, he gives the following account:— "Talking of Charlotte, I must tell her that I have, to the best of my power, paid her a poetic compliment. The air is admirable; true old Highland; it was the tune of a Gaelic song which an Inverness lady sung me, and I was so charmed with it, that I begged her to write me a set of it from her singing, for it had never been set before. I am fixed that it shall go in Johnson's next number, so Charlotte and you need not spend your precious time in contradicting me. I won't say the poetry is first rate, though I am convinced it is very well; and what is not always the case with compliments to ladies, it is not only sincere but just." The Poet alludes to his sweet and graceful song, "The Banks of the Devon."— The praise is figurative:—

> "Let Bourbon exult in his gay gilded lilies,
> And England triumphant display her proud rose,
> A fairer than either adorns the green valleys,
> Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows."

Having secured her immortality in song, and probably observed the coldness with which his most harmonious

compliments were received, Burns complains obliquely of Charlotte's want of sympathy, by imagining that his words have no longer any fascination for woman. "My rhetoric," he says, "seems quite to have lost its effect on the lovely half of mankind; I have seen the day, but that is 'a tale of other years.' In my conscience, I believe, that my heart has been so often on fire, that it is absolutely vitrified. I look on the sex with something like the admiration with which I regard the starry sky in a frosty December night; I admire the beauty of the Creator's workmanship; I am charmed with the wild, but graceful eccentricity of their motions, and wish them good night." He says in another letter, that he has a heart for friendship, if not for love, and deserves the tender sympathy of the two blooming spinsters. "Charlotte and you are just two favorite resting places for my soul in her wanderings through the weary, thorny wilderness of this world. God knows I am ill-fitted for the struggle; I glory in being a poet, and want to be thought a wise man; I would fain be generous, and I desire to be rich. After all, I am afraid I am a lost subject. Some folk hae a hantle o' fauts, but I'm a ne'er-do-weel."

As the correspondence proceeded, Burns was overset by a tipsy coachman, and one of his legs dangerously bruised. He thinks of Harvieston and the condolence of beauty. "I am under the care of a surgeon," he says, "with a bruised limb extended on a cushion, and the tints of my mind vying with the livid horror preceding a midnight thunder-storm. I have taken tooth and nail, to the Bible; it is really a glorious book. I would give my best song to my worst foe, I mean the merit of making it, to have you and Charlotte by me. You are angelic creatures, and would pour oil and wine into my wounded spirit." Charlotte Hamilton, to whose ear and heart most of these fine things were addressed, was not to be moved by the muse; she was probably aware of the more than equivocal situation in which the Poet stood with regard to Jean Armour, and she felt a growing regard for Adair, whom Burns had introduced. This, in some measure, accounts for the indifferent success of the Poet, in a matter on which he seems to have set his heart, and also for the destruction of his letters.

The third and last tour of Burns was performed in the company of Nicol. The master of the High-school had made himself agreeable to the Poet by an intrepid mode of expression, and an admiration of whatever was hair-brained and sentimental. He was

"A fiery ether-cap; a fractious chiel,"

and altogether one of those companions who require prudent management. They commenced their tour in a post-chaise, on the 25th of August, 1787. Burns kept a journal of the journey: it is now before me, and begins thus: —"I leave Edinburgh for a northern tour, in company with my good friend Mr. Nicol, whose originality of humor promises me much entertainment. Linlithgow, a fertile, improved county. West Lothian;—the more elegance and luxury among farmers, I always observe, in equal proportion, the rudeness and stupidity of the peasantry. For this, among other reasons, I think that a man of romantic taste—'a man of feeling'—will be better pleased with the poverty, but intelligent minds of the peasantry in Ayrshire, than the opulence of a club of Merse farmers, when at the same time he considers the Vandalism of their plough-folks. I carry this idea so far that an uninclosed, half-improved country, is to me actually more agreeable, and gives me more pleasure as a prospect than a country cultivated like a garden." The Poet refused to look on the world through the colored spectacles of political economists; he preferred happiness to wealth.

The soil about Linlithgow he considered as light and thin; the town bore all the marks of ancient grandeur, and the situation he declared to be retired and rural.— "The old Royal Palace," says his journal, "is a tolerable fine but melancholy ruin, sweetly situated on a small elevation by the brink of a loch. Shown the room where the beautiful injured Mary Queen of Scots was born. A pretty good old Gothic church with the infamous stool of repentance standing in the old Romish way, on a lofty situation. What a poor, pimping business is a Presbyterian place of worship; dirty, narrow, and squalid; stuck in the corner of old Popish grandeur, such as Linlithgow, and much more Melrose. Ceremony and show, if judi-

ciously thrown in, absolutely necessary for the bulk of mankind, both in civil and religious matters." He continues his tour and his remarks—"Pleasant view of Dumfermline, and the rest of the fertile coast of Fife. Come through the rich Carse of Falkirk to pass the night.—Falkirk, nothing remarkable, except the grave of Sir John the Grahame, over which, in the succession of time, four stones have been placed. Pass Dunipace—a place laid out with fine taste—a charming amphitheatre, bounded by a fine village. The Carron, running down the bosom of the whole, makes it one of the most charming little prospects I have seen. Come on to Bannockburn; shown the old house where James III. finished so tragically his unfortunate life; the field of Bannockburn, the hole where glorious Bruce set his standard. Here no Scot can pass uninterested."

I prefer the account briefly rendered in one of his letters to all the rapture of his journal.—"Stirling, August 26—This morning I knelt at the tomb of Sir John the Grahame, the gallant friend of the immortal Wallace, and two hours ago I said a fervent prayer for old Caledonia, over the hole in a blue whinstone, where Robert the Bruce fixed his royal standard on the banks of Bannockburn; and just now, from Stirling Castle, I have seen, by the setting sun, the glorious prospect of the windings of Forth through the rich Carse of Stirling, and skirting the equally rich Carse of Falkirk." The ancient glory of his country, and the deeds of her heroes, were ever present to his mind.

In his way to Crieff, Burns saw the Ochell-hills, the Devon, the Teith, and the Allan; he rode up the romantic Earn; visited Strathallan, "a fine country, but little improved;" Auchtertyre, where "grows the aik," as his own inimitable song says, and going up Glen-Almond, he visited the "traditionary grave" of Ossian.—Making his way to Taymouth, he gazed long and earnestly on the spreading vale, the princely towers, and the expanding sea: the torrent at his feet came in for a share of poetic praise:

> "The sweeping theatre of hanging woods;
> The incessant roar of headlong-tumbling floods."

He passed through Dunkeld, visited the Lyon river, and knelt and said prayers in the Druid's temple, a smaller Stonehenge: of this piece of antiquity, he says, "Three circles of stones—the outermost sunk—the second has thirteen stones remaining—the innermost has eight—two large detached ones, like a gate to the south-east." Of Aberfeldy he briefly writes—"described in rhyme." He composed "The Birks of Aberfeldy" as he stood by the falls; the scene is truly beautiful, and the song rivals in truth and effect the landscape. From thence he proceeded to Birnam top; looked down the Tay, and visited a Hermitage on the Bran-water, dedicated to the genius of Ossian.—"Breakfast with Dr. Stewart; Neil Gow plays—a short, stout-built honest Highland figure, with his grayish hair shed on his honest social brow; an interesting face, marking strong sense; kind open-heartedness, mixed with unmistrusting simplicity; visit his house—Margaret Gow." He next passed up the Tummel to Blair; glanced at the beautiful and romantic Fascally; the wild grandeur of the Pass of Killiecrankie. In remembrance of this in one of his after songs, he makes a soldier of Mackay's say—

"The bauld Pitcur fell in a fur,
And Clavers got a clankie,
Else I'd hae fed an Athole gled
On the braes of Killiecrankie."

From the battle-field, Burns proceeded to the palace of the Duke of the Athol, at Blair, where he was welcomed with much kindness and courtesy:—"Sup with the duchess; easy and happy from the manners of the family; confirmed in my good opinion of my friend Walker." Such is his brief record of this event; Professor Walker merited the eulogium, and more; no sooner did he observe Nicol, than, knowing the manners of the man, he prepared an entertainment according to the nature of the fierce pedagogue. A fishing-rod and a servant to attend him by day, and choice wine and a snug table at night, charmed Nicol and left Burns leisure to converse with the Duke and Duchess, and visit the scenes around which he declared were fine by nature, but hurt by bad taste. Of the visit and visitor, the Professor has given us the following account:—

"Burns seemed at once to perceive and appreciate what

was due to the company and to himself, and never to forget a proper respect for the separate species of dignity belonging to each. He did not arrogate conversation, but when led into it he spoke with ease, propriety, and manliness. He tried to exert his abilities, because he knew it was ability alone gave him a title to be there. The Duchess's fine young family attracted much of his admiration; he drank their healths as "honest men and bonnie lassies," an idea which was much applauded by the company, and with which he has very felicitously closed to his poem." The Poet walked out with the Professor to view the grounds and the scenery. "When we reached," says Walker, "a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination. It was with much difficulty I prevailed on him to quit this spot, and to be introduced in proper time for supper."

It was the wish of the Duke that Burns should visit the banks of the Bruar, where the scenery is bold and naked. The Poet accustomed to the wooded banks of the Ayr and the Doon, was not disposed to admire the barren sublimity of the Bruar, and accordingly wrote a rhyming petition, in which the water requests the umbrage of birch and hazel from the hands of the noble proprietor. This was almost the only wish which the Poet ever uttered that any pains were taken to gratify. The banks of the Bruar are now clothed as he described—the trouts are sheltered from the sun by the overhanging boughs—the songster's nest is to be seen in its season,

> "And birks extend their fragrant arms
> To screen the dear embrace."

Burns hastened his departure from Blair; two of his biographers express regret at this. Had he remained, they observe, but a few days, he would have met Lord Melville, who had the chief management of the internal affairs of Scotland, and who "might not improbably have been induced to bestow that consideration on the claims of the Poet which, in the absence of any personal acquaintance, Burns' works ought to have received at his hands." Lord

Melville admired, with the Poet, woman's beauty, wine's allurements, and rough intrepidity of conversation: there were no other links to unite them. It was more to the purpose that Burns, at the table of Athole, made the acquaintance of Graham of Fintray, who has the merit of doing the little that was done for him in the way of patronage.

Historic and poetic scenes—spots where battles had been fought and songs sung, were most in request with Burns. On quitting Blair he shaped his course towards the Spey, and followed the stream. The straths he found rich, the mountains wild and magnificent. He saw Rothemurche and the gloomy forests of Glenmore, and passing rapidly through Strathspey, halted an hour at a wild inn, and visited Sir James Grant, whose lady he pronounces in his journal sweet and pleasant. "I passed," said he to his brother Gilbert, "through a wild country among cliffs grey with eternal snows and glens gloomy and savage." He came upon the Findhorn "in mist and darkness," visited Castle-Cawdor, where Macbeth murdered Duncan, saw the bed in which tradition says the king was stabbed; hurried on to Fort-George, and thence to Inverness. He took a hurried look at Loch Ness with its wild braes, and the General's Hut; visited Urquhart Castle, with its fine strath; and was so rapt at the Falls of Fyers that he broke out into verse.

Short as the Poet's stay was in Inverness, he found leisure to admire the classical capital of the eastern Highlands. The ladies, with their snooded hair and simple elegance of dress; the jail, which was pronounced unable to retain a prisoner who belonged to a clan; the fort, raised during the days of Cromwell to keep the land in awe; and the beautiful Hill of Fairies, near the river side, claimed by tradition as the grave of Thomas the Rhymer, were not looked upon without emotion and remark. On leaving Inverness he passed over Culloden Moor, a place calculated to awaken sad reflections. On that heath, so fatal to the hopes of our ancient line of princes—a heath desolate and blasted, and only relieved in its brown barrenness by the green mounds raised over the bones of the brave—the Poet paused, and was long lost in thought;

the fruit of his meditations was a lyric, which cannot easily be equalled for simplicity and pathos :—

"The lovely lass o' Inverness,
Nae joy nor pleasure can she see ;
For e'en and morn she cries, alas !
And ay the saut tear blin's her e'e.
Drumossie moor—Drumossie day—
A waefu' day it was to me !
For there I lost my father dear—
My father dear, and brethren three."

The Poet reached Kilravock in time for breakfast; his record of this halt is short, but to the point:—"Old Mrs. Rose: sterling sense, warm heart, strong feelings, and honest pride, all in an uncommon degree. Mrs. Rose, jun., a little milder than the mother; this, perhaps, owing to her being younger. Mrs. Rose and Mr. Grant accompany us to Kildrummie. Two young ladies: Miss Rose, who sung two Gaelic songs, beautiful and lovely; Miss Sophia Brodie, most agreeable and amiable; both of them gentle, mild, the sweetest creatures on earth—and happiness be with them !" Of this visit the Poet had long a grateful recollection: "There was something in my reception at Kilravock," he says, in a letter to Mrs. Rose, "so different from the cold, obsequious, dancing-school bow of politeness, that it almost got into my head that friendship had occupied her ground without the intermediate march of acquaintance. I wish I could transcribe, or rather transfuse, into language the glow of my heart. My ready fancy, with colors more mellow than life itself, painted the beautifully wild scenery of Kilravock—the venerable grandeur of the castle—the spreading woods—the winding river, gladly leaving his unsightly heathy source, and lingering with apparent delight as he passed the Fairy-Walk at the foot of the garden—your late distressful anxieties—your present enjoyments—your dear little angel, the pride of your hopes—my aged friend venerable in worth and years, whose loyalty and other virtues will strongly entitle her to the support of the Almighty spirit here, and his peculiar favor in a happier state of existence. You cannot imagine, madam, how much such feelings delight me; they are the dearest proofs of my own immortality."

Burns, it would appear by a letter from Mrs. Rose, had been hurried from her fireside by the importunities of Nicol; the two friends continued their journey in a colder mood. The diary was now sadly neglected; it affords, however, sundry touches of character:—"Dine at Nairn; fall in with a pleasant enough gentleman—Dr. Stewart, who had been abroad with his father in the 'Forty-Five;' and Mr. Falconer, a spare, irascible, warm-hearted Norlan and a non-juror." He passed by Kinloss, where Edward the First halted in his conquering march, intimidated as much by wild woods and savage hills as by the warlike people. He admired in Elgin the remains of Scotland's noblest cathedral, and examined at Forres the enormous slab of gray stone, in shape resembling a sword-blade, erected as a monument of peace between Sweno of Denmark, and Malcolm II. Something like sculptures on the sides, antiquarians aver, intimate a drawn battle and a treaty of peace.—"Mr. Brodie tells me," says the Poet, "that the moor where Shakspeare lays Macbeth's witch-meeting is still haunted, and that the country folk won't pass it by night."

On reaching Fochabers, the Poet left his companion at an inn, and went to pay his respects to the Duke and Duchess of Gordon, to whose splendid mansion the village is as a suburb.—"He was received," says Currie, "with the utmost hospitality and kindness; and the family being about to sit down to dinner, he was invited to take his place at table as a matter of course. This invitation he accepted, and after drinking a few glasses of wine he rose up, and proposed to withdraw. On being pressed to stay he mentioned, for the first time, his engagement with his fellow-traveller; and, his noble host offering to send a servant to conduct Mr. Nicol to the castle, Burns insisted on undertaking that office himself: he was, however, accompanied by a gentleman, a particular acquaintance of the Duke, by whom the invitation was delivered in all the forms of politeness." They found Nicol in a foaming passion: in vain the Poet soothed, explained, expostulated: he refused all apology, and kept striding up and down the streets of Fochabers, cursing the postillions for not yoking the horses and hurrying

him away. Burns, it is said, eyed the irascible pedagogue for a moment, as if deciding whether he should confront him with fury equal to his own, or quietly seat himself in his own nook of the chaise, and proceed southward. He chose the latter alternative, and turned his back on Castle-Gordon with a vexation he sought not to conceal. The rough temper of his companion did not, however, prevent him from soliciting the muse for a song in honor of The Gordon; but the muse seems to have been infected with the mood of Nicol; she spoke, but not happily. All he says in his journal is, "Cross Spey to Fochabers; fine palace, worthy of the generous proprietor. The Duke makes me happier than ever man did—noble, princely, yet mild, condescending and affable; gay and kind: the Duchess, witty and sensible—God bless them!"

The visit of Burns to Castle-Gordon was not altogether one of curiosity or chance. The Duchess desired to befriend the Poet; she spoke of his merits in the north, and praised his poems in the south, in coteries where their language was dark and mystical. Her friend, Henry Addington, now Viscount Sidmouth, saw in the verses of the rustic bard a spontaneous vigor of expression, and a glowing richness of language all but rivalling Shakspeare. He talked of them among the titled and enthusiastic, and took pleasure in quoting them to Pitt and to Melville. This was not unknown to the Duchess: she invited him to Castle-Gordon, and promised him the company of Burns and Beattie. The future premier was unable to accept the invitation; but wrote and forwarded, it is said, these memorable lines—memorable as the first indication of that deep love which England now entertains for the genius of Burns:—

"Yes! pride of Scotia's favored plains, 'tis thine
The warmest feelings of the heart to move;
To bid it throb with sympathy divine,
To glow with friendship, or to melt with love.

"What though each morning sees thee rise to toil:
Tho' Plenty on thy cot no blessings showers,
Yet Independence cheers thee with her smile,
And Fancy strews thy moorland with her flowers.

"And dost thou blame the impartial will of Heaven,
Untaught of life the good and ill to scan!

To thee the Muse's choicest wreath is given;
To thee the genuine dignity of man:
Then to the want of worldly gear resign'd,
Be grateful for the wealth of thy exhaustless mind."

Aberdeen the Poet calls a lazy town, contrary to the general opinion of Scotland. Here he met with Bishop Skinner, son of the author of Tullochgorum,—"A man," he says, "whose venerable manner is the most marked of any in so young a man. Near Stonehive, the coast a good deal romantic—meet my relations. Robert Burns, writer in Stonehive, one of those who love fun, a gill, and a joke; his wife, sweet and hospitable, without any affectation." He now directed his steps to Muthie, and visited the caverns on its wild, romantic coast; he stopped for an hour to examine Arbroath Abbey; passed through Dundee—"a low-lying but pleasant town,"—and having examined Broughty Castle on the banks of the Tay, he went "through," says his journal, "the rich harvests and fine hedge-rows of the Carse of Gowrie; along the romantic margin of the Grampian Hills to the fruitful, woody, hilly country which encloses Perth." In going up Strathern he visited the banks of Endermay, famous in song; then mused awhile on the scene made memorable by the affecting story of Bessy Bell and Mary Gray and, finally, hurried to Queensferry, "through a cold, barren country." He parted with the north in a better mood in his last than in his first journey; he had been every where, save at Arbruchil, kindly received; chief had vied with chief in doing him honor, and though he took but some twenty and odd days to this extensive tour, he had seen, observed, and imbibed so much of the mountain spirit as colored many of his future lyrics, He took farewell of the north in character. On passing the Lowland line he turned about and exclaimed:—

"When death's dark stream I ferry o'er,
A day that surely shall come,
In Heaven itself I'll ask no more
Than just a Highland welcome."

Having looked leisurely over the farms which still awaited his offer on Dalswinton estate, and remained a a week or two with his mother at Mauchline, Burns pro-

ceeded to Edinburgh for the purpose of arranging his affairs with Creech: a sharp and yet dilatory person. He entertained a hope, too, that some of the leading men of Scotland would find him a task less alien to his feelings than farming, which in those days yielded but a bare subsistence; and as he had been acceptable to them before, he expected to be no less so now, when the world had sanctioned their praise. His bookseller had distant correspondents to consult, and the proceeds of a large edition to calculate; and this was the work of time. The patronage, too, which the Poet anticipated, required leisure; the great must not be pressed with eager solicitude by the poor and the dependent; their deeds of generosity must be allowed to come in their own time and season, and seem the offspring of their own natures.

The active spirit of Burns could not be idle: he addressed himself to the two-fold business of love and verse. I have related the success of his poetic homage to Charlotte Hamilton; she had passed from his memory, when, on December 30, 1787, he thus wrote to his friend Richard Brown, mariner:—"I am just the same will-o'-wisp being I used to be; about the first and fourth quarters of the moon, I generally set in for the trade-wind of wisdom; but about the full and the change, I am the luckless victim of mad tornadoes which blow me into chaos. Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom, and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow. My Highland dirk, that used to hang beside my crutches, I have gravely removed into a neighbouring closet, the key of which I cannot command in case of spring-tide paroxysms. You may guess of her wit by the verses which she sent me the other day:—

"Talk not of love; it gives me pain:
For love has been my foe:
He bound me with an iron chain,
And plunged me deep in woe."

This Edinburgh beauty was the Mrs. Mac. of the Poet's toasts when the wine circulated—the accomplished Clarinda, to whom under the name of Sylvander, he addressed so much prose and verse. This "mistress of the Poet's soul, and queen of poetesses," could not be other-

wise than tolerant in her taste if she sympathized in the affected strains which he offered at the altar of her beauty. His prose is cumbrous and his verse labored: there are, it is true, passages of natural feeling and sentiments sometimes of a high order, but in general, his raptures are artificial, and his sensibility assumed. He puts himself into strange postures and picturesque positions, and feels imaginary pains to correspond; he wounds himself to show how readily the sores of love can be mended, and flogs his body like a devotee to obtain the compassion of his patron saint. Nor is this all; in his addresses he is often audaciously bold; he wants tenderness, too, and sometimes taste:—

"In vain would Prudence, with her decent sneer,
Point to a censuring world, and bid me fear:
Above that world on wings of love I rise,
I know its worst, and can that worst despise.
Wrong'd, slander'd, shunned, unpitied, unredrest,
The mock'd quotation of the scorner's jest,
Let Prudence' direst bodements on me fall—
Clarinda, rich reward! o'erpays them all."

These lines are sufficiently forward, and could not but be painful to the lady unless she smiled on them as the fantastic effusions of a pastoral Platonism. In another part of the same poem he vows,

"By all on high adoring mortals know,
By all the conscious villain fears below,"

to love her while wood grows and water runs, according to the tenure of entailed property.

It is some apology for the Poet, perhaps, that these compositions, which I am unwilling to regard as serious, were produced in the painful leisure which a bruised limb afforded him; the lady to whom they were addressed, was now and then a visitor to the crippled Bard, and diverted him with her wit and soothed him with her presence. It is true that the poem from which these lines are extracted contains couplets presumptuous and familiar, and asserts that they were commended by his fair correspondent; but this cannot well be believed by those who draw conclusions from the general spirit of the letters. Those who know Clarinda cannot but feel that Burns thought of her when he said, "People of nice sen-

sibility and generous minds have a certain intrinsic dignity which fires at being trifled with or lowered, or even too closely approached." Yet watched as he was by beauty on his couch, and praised as a Poet from "Maidenkirk to John o' Groats," the Poet was any thing but happy. "I have a hundred times wished," he says in a letter to Mrs. Dunlop, "that one could resign life as an officer resigns his commission; for I would not take in any poor ignorant wretch by selling out. Lately I was a sixpenny private, and, God knows, a miserable soldier enough; now I march to the campaign a starving cadet, a little more conspicuously wretched."

During the abode of Burns in Edinburgh, Johnson commenced his "Musical Museum," the object of which was to unite the songs and the music of Scotland in one general collection. The proprietor, a man of more enthusiasm than knowledge, inserted in his first volume, published in June, 1787, several airs of at least doubtful origin, and several songs of more than doubtful merit: before he commenced the second volume, he had acquired the help of Burns; indeed, the first bears marks of his hand. "Green grow the Rashes" is an acknowledged production, and "Bonnie Dundee" carries the peculiar impress of his genius:—

> "My blessings upon that sweet wee lippie;
> My blessings upon thy bonnie e'e bree;
> Thy smiles are sae like my blythe soger laddie,
> Thou's ay be dearer and dearer to me."

To the second volume, published in February, 1788, Burns contributed the preface, and no less than thirty lyrics. In the former he says, "The songs contained in this volume, both music and poetry, are all of them the work of Scotsmen. Wherever the old words could be recovered, they have been preferred; both as generally suiting better the genius of the tunes, and to preserve the productions of those earlier sons of the Scottish muses.—Ignorance and prejudice may, perhaps, affect to sneer at the simplicity of the poetry or music of some of these pieces; but their having been for ages the favorites of nature's judges, the common people, was to the editor a sufficient test of their merit."

Most of the songs which Burns contributed are of great

merit. "To the Weavers gin ye go" is the homely song of a country lass who went to warp a web, and forgot her errand; for—

"A bonnie westlin weaver lad
Sat working at his loom,
He took my heart as wi' a net
In every knot and thrum."

It relates, I have heard, the story of one of his rustic sweethearts. "Whistle an' I'll come to you, my lad" is an imperfect version of one of his happiest songs. The idea is old—and some of the words. The verse which he added will ever be new:—

"Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me:
Come down the back stairs when ye come to court me:
Come down the back stairs, and let naebody see,
And come as ye were na coming to me."

He loved to eke out the old melodies of Caledonia.—"I'm o'er young to marry yet" is sung by a very young lady, who upbraids her suitor with a design to carry her from her mother, and put her into the company of a strange man during the lonely nights of winter. She, however, discovers a remedy:—

"Fu' loud and shrill the frosty wind
Blaws through the leafless timmer, sir;
But if ye'll come this gate again,
I'll aulder be gin simmer, sir."

"The Birks of Aberfeldy" originated in an old strain called the Birks of Abergeldie, but surpasses it as far as sunshine excels candlelight. The same may be said of "Macpherson's Farewell." Something of the rudiments of this bold rant may be found in old verses of the same name; but they are, in comparison, as barley-chaff is to gold-sand. The hero of the song, a musician, and noted freebooter, was taken red-hand, and hurried to execution. When the rope was round his neck, he sent for his favorite fiddle, played the air called, after him, Macpherson's Rant, offered the instrument in vain to any one who could play the tune, then broke it over the hangman's head, and flung himself from the ladder. His song is in character, wild, daring, and revengeful:—

"O what is death but parting breath?
On many a bloody plain
I've dared his face, and in this place
I scorn him yet again.
Untie these bands from off my hands,
And bring to me my sword,
And there's no a man in all Scotland,
But I'll brave him at a word."

The genius of the north had an influence over the Poet's musings in other compositions. In "The Highland Lassie," the lover complains of want of wealth, and the faithlessness of fortune, but strong in affection declares,

"For her I'll dare the billows roar,
For her I'll trace a distant shore,
That Indian wealth may lustre throw
Around my Highland lassie, O."

In "The Northern Lass" he utters similar sentiments; and in "Braw, braw lads of Galla Water," his hand may be traced by the curious in Scottish song; it is too kenspeckle to be denied:—

"Sae fair her hair, sae bent her brow,
Sae bonnie blue her een my dearie,
Sae white her teeth, sae sweet her mou,
The mair I look, she's mair my dearie."

"Stay, my Charmer," if not of Highland extraction, owes its air to the north. There are but eight lines; but he excelled in saying much in a small compass:—

"By my love so ill requited;
By the faith you fondly plighted,
By the pangs of lovers slighted,
Do not, do not leave me so."

To a jacobite feeling we owe that fine strain "Strathallan's Lament."—"This air," says the Poet, "is the composition of one of the worthiest and best men living, Allan Masterton. As he and I were both sprouts of jacobitism, we agreed to dedicate the words and air to that cause." The song is supposed to be the "Goodnight" of James Drummond, Viscount of Strathallan, who escaped to France from Culloden. Even in the days of Burns, the language which the exile is made to utter, could not but be unacceptable to many:—

"In the cause of right engaged,
Wrongs injurious to redress,
Honor's war we strongly waged,
But the heavens denied success."

The amended songs are numerous. In his hastiest touches there is something always which no hand but that of Burns could communicate. "How long and dreary is the night!" is mostly his; the last verse will go to many hearts:—

"How slow ye move, ye heavy hours,
As ye were wae and wearie!
It was na sae ye glinted by,
When I was wi' my dearie."

The hoary wooer in "To daunton me," is sketched with all the scornful spirit of a lady who has set her heart on a younger person:—

"He hirples twa-fauld as he dow,
Wi' his toothless gab and his auld bald pow,
And the rain dreeps down frae his red bleered e'e,
That auld man shall never daunton me."

In "Bonnie Peggie Alison," the Poet indulges in such license of language as may startle the fastidious; yet it is but the rapture of an enthusiastic heart:—

"When in my arms wi' a' thy charms,
I clasp my countless treasure,
I seek nae mair o' heaven to share
Than sic a moment's pleasure."

"The Dusty Miller" exhibits a few of his happy emendations, A young woman, in remembering the attractions of a lover who wins a shilling before he spends a groat, sings with arch simplicity—

"Dusty was the coat,
Dusty was the color,
Dusty was the kiss
I got frae the miller."

He withheld his name from "Theniel Menzies' bonnie Mary." The buoyancy of the language, and the natural truth of the delineation must be felt by all who know what lyric composition is:—

"Her een sae bright, her brow sae white,
Her haffet locks as brown's a berry,
And aye they dimpled wi' a smile,
The rosy cheeks o' bonnie Mary."

"The Banks of the Devon," "Raving winds around her blowing," "Musing on the roaring ocean," "A Rose-bud by my early walk," and "Where braving angry Winter's storms," were all published in the Poet's name. In the first, he paid homage to the charms of Charlotte Hamilton; and in the latter, to the gentle and winning graces of Margaret Chalmers. These are more finished and equal, yet scarcely so happy as some of the hasty and perhaps inconsiderate snatches with which he eked out the fragmentary strains of the old minstrels.

That his heart was much with this sort of work, we may gather from his letter to Mrs. Rose of Kilravock, Feb. 17, 1788:—"I am assisting a friend in a collection of Scottish songs set to their proper tunes. Every air worth preserving is to be included. Among others, I have given 'Morag,' and some few Highland airs which pleased me most, a dress which will be more generally known, though far—far inferior in real merit." He wrote to friends—east, west, north, and south, for airs and verses for the Museum. From his old comrade M'Candlish he begged "Pompey's Ghost"—from Skinner of Linshart: from Dr. Blacklock he entreated communications, and he drew upon his own memory, for some of those antique strains picked up from the singing of his mother or the maidens of Ayrshire.

To those who charge Burns with idleness or dissipation during this winter in Edinburgh, many will think thirty songs an answer sufficient, without taking into consideration his maimed limb, and his numerous letters to Clarinda. He had other matters, too, on his mind; I have said that he exhibited early symtoms of jacobitism; his Highland tours and conversations with the chiefs and ladies of the north, strengthened a liking which he seems to have inherited from his fathers. On the 31st day of December, 1787, he was present at a meeting to celebrate the birthday of the last of the race of our native princes, the unfortunate Charles Edward: he acted the part of laureate on the occasion, and recited an ode, lamenting the past, sympathizing in the present, and prophesying retribution for the future. Like almost all the verse for which Burns taxed his spirit, the ode is cumbrous and inflated; neither the fiery impetuosity of Grahame, nor the calm intrepidity of Balmerino inspired him—

"Ye honored mighty dead!
Who nobly perished in the glorious cause,
Your king, your country, and your laws;
From great Dundee, who, smiling, victory led,
And fell a martyr in her arms;
What breast of northern ice but warms
To bold Balmerino's undying name?
Whose soul of fire, lighted at Heaven's high flame,
Deserves the proudest wreath departed heroes claim!"

Who were the Poet's associates at this anniversary no one has told us. The white rose of jacobitism was worn in those days by many people of rank and condition: it was the cognizance of all who regretted that Scotland had ceased to be a separate kingdom, had lost the dignity of her parliament, the honors of her monarchy, and was compelled to send her children into another land to represent her interests, where they were exposed to the scoffs and insults of a proud and haughty people. This was the jacobitism of Burns; though he sung of the woes of Drumossie, and the sufferings of Prince Charles, he had no desire to see the ancient line restored, and the Hanoverian dynasty expelled, since he knew that every step towards the throne would be on a dead man's body. His heart clung to the immediate descendants of Bruce, and it is probable that he never studied the mystery of a constitution, which, to secure our freedom, raised princes to the throne, who could neither speak our language, nor comprehend the genius of the people. His whole affections were concentrated on his native land; his whole object was to do it honor; for this he sacrificed his time; to this he dedicated his genius; and on this, though poor, he laid out some of the little wealth he had. He saw with sorrow that the dust of Fergusson, the Poet, lay among the ignoble dead, and desired to raise a memorial, such as might guide the steps of the lovers of Scottish song to the grave of his brother Bard. This humble wish was graciously granted by the authorities of the Canongate kirk, and he raised a monumental stone, which is still to be seen among the thick-piled gravestones of the burial-ground.

That Burns could write so many songs is to be marvelled at, when we reflect that, during most of the time,

a sort of civil war existed between him and his bookseller, of which many symptoms are visible in his printed and manuscript correspondence.—"I have broken measures," he says, "with Creech, and last week I wrote him a frosty keen letter. He replied in terms of chastisement, and promised me, upon his honor, that I should have the account on Monday; but this is Tuesday, and yet I have not heard a word from him. God have mercy on me! a poor, damned, incautious, duped, unfortunate fool! The sport, the miserable victim of rebellious pride, hypochondriac imagination, agonizing sensibility, and bedlam passions—

'I wish that I were dead, but I'm no like to die.'

I have this moment got a hint. I fear I am something like undone; but I hope for the best. Come, stubborn pride and unshrinking resolution! accompany me through this, to me, miserable world. You must not desert me! Your friendship I think I can count on, though I should date my letters from a marching regiment. Early in life, and all my life, I reckoned on a recruiting drum as my forlorn hope. Seriously though, life at present presents me with but a melancholy path; but my limb will soon be sound, and I shall struggle on."

These expressions refer to whispers which had reached his ear about the solvency of Creech, and are contained in a letter to Margaret Chalmers: the conduct of his bookseller dwelt long on his mind; we find him, on the 4th of January, 1789, thus writing to Dr. Moore.—"I cannot boast about Creech's ingenuous dealing; he kept me hanging on about Edinburgh from the 7th of August until the 13th of April, 1788, before he would condescend to give me a statement of affairs; nor had I got it even then, but for an angry letter I wrote him which irritated his pride. I could not a 'tale' but a detail 'unfold;' but what am I that I should speak against the Lord's anointed bailie of Edinburgh! I give you this information, but I give it to yourself only, for I am still much in the gentleman's mercy. Perhaps I injure the man in the idea I am sometimes tempted to have of him. God forbid I should! A little time will try, for in a month I shall go to town to wind up the business if possible." That Creech, after

long evasion, behaved honorably and liberally to the impatient Poet, is well enough known to the world: I record these complaints to vindicate the latter from the charge of having loitered needlessly in Edinburgh, and refrained from putting the ploughshare in the ground which was offered for his acceptance.

Burns now set seriously about considering his future prospects. Having settled with Creech, he wrote to Mr. Millar that he would accept his offer with regard to the farm; he lent two hundred pounds to his brother Gilbert, to enable him to mend himself in the world and support his mother, whom he tenderly loved; and he resolved to unite himself to Jean Armour, carry her to the banks of the Nith, and follow the plough and the muses. What he had seen and endured in Edinburgh during his second visit, admonished him regarding the reed on which he leant, when he hoped for a place of profit and honor from the aristocracy on account of his genius. On his first appearance the doors of the nobility opened spontaneously, "on golden hinges turning," and he ate spiced meats and drank rare wines, interchanging nods and smiles with "high dukes and mighty earls." A colder reception awaited his second coming; the doors of lords and ladies opened with a tardy courtesy; he was received with a cold and measured stateliness, was seldom requested to stop, seldomer to repeat his visit; and one of his companions used to relate with what indignant feeling the Poet recounted his fruitless calls and uncordial receptions in the good town of Edinburgh. That he had high hopes is well known; there were not wanting friends to whisper that lordly, nay, royal patronage was certain; nor were such expectations at all unreasonable—but genius is not the passport to patronage; he was allied to no noble family, and could not come forward under the shelter of a golden wing; he was unconnected with any party which could pretend to political influence, and who had power either to retard or forward a ministerial measure; moreover, he was one of those "whim-inspired" persons of whom his inimitable "Bard's Epitaph" sings:—

> "Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
> Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool."

His case was, therefore, next to hopeless; he asked for nothing, and nothing was offered, though men of rank and power were aware that he was unfitted with an aim in life—that poetry alone could not sustain him, and that he must go back to the flail and the furrow. He went to Edinburgh, strong in the belief that genius such as his would raise him in society; but he came not back without a sourness of spirit and a bitterness of feeling.

The pride of Burns, which was great, would not allow him to complain, and his ambition, which was still greater, hindered him from regarding his condition as yet hopeless. When he complained at all, he did not make his moan to man; his letters to his companions or his friends are sometimes stern, fierce, and full of defiance; he uttered his lament in the ear of woman, and seemed to be soothed with her attention and her sympathy.—"When I must escape into a corner," he says bitterly to Mrs. Dunlop, "lest the rattling equipage of some gaping blockhead should mangle me in the mire, I am tempted to exclaim what merits has he had, or what demerit have I had, in some state of preëxistence, that he is ushered into this state of being with the sceptre of rule and the key of riches in his puny fist, and I am kicked into the world the sport of folly or the victim of pride? I have read somewhere of a monarch who was so out of humor with the Ptolomean system of astronomy, that he said, had he been of the Creator's council, he could have saved him a great deal of labor and absurdity. I will not defend this blasphemous speech; but often, as I have glided with humble stealth through the pomp of Prince's-street, it has suggested itself to me, as an improvement on the present human figure, that a man, in proportion to his own conceit of his consequence in the world, could have pushed himself out as a snail pushes out his horns, or as we draw out a perspective. This would enable us at once to adjust the ceremonials in making a bow or making way to a great man, and that, too, within a second of the precise spherical angle of reverence, or an inch of the particular point of respectful distance, which the important creature himself requires." The condition of the Poet made, we fear, such bitter reflections matters

of frequent recurrence. The learned authors—and Edinburgh swarmed with them—claimed rank above the inspired clod of the valley; the gentry asserted such superiority as their natural inheritance; the nobility held their elevation by act of parliament or the grace of majesty; and none of them were prepared to accept the brotherhood of one who held the patent of his honors immediately from nature.

In the course of the winter Burns resolved, since no better might be, to unite the farmer with the poet; some one persuaded him that to both he could join the gauger. So soon as this possessed his fancy, he determined to beg the humble boon from his patrons, and as no one seemed more likely to be kind than the Earl of Glencairn, he addressed him anxiously:—"I have weighed—long and seriously weighed—my situation. I wish to get into the excise: I am told your lordship's interest will easily procure me the grant from the commissioners; and your lordship's patronage and goodness, which have already rescued me from obscurity, wretchedness, and exile, emboldened me to ask that interest. You have likewise put it in my power to save the little tie of home that sheltered an aged mother, two brothers, and three sisters from destruction. I am ill qualified to dog the heels of greatness with the impertinence of solicitation, and tremble nearly as much at the thought of the cold promise as the cold denial." What the Earl did in this matter is unknown; his conduct seems to have satisfied Burns, for at his death, which soon followed, he poured out a poetic lament full of the most touching sensibility.

The excise commission came in an unlooked for way. While Burns was laid up with his crushed limb, he was attended by Alexander Wood, surgeon, a gentleman still affectionately remembered as "kind old Sandy Wood:" to him the Poet had mentioned his desire to obtain a situation in the excise. Wood went to work, and so bestirred himself, that Grahame of Fintray put his name on the roll of excisemen at once. The Poet, who, like the hero of his own inimitable song, was

"Contented wi' little, and cantie wi' mair."

communicated this stroke of what he called good fortune to Margaret Chalmers in these words:—"I have entered into the excise. I go to the west for about three weeks, and then return to Edinburgh for six weeks' instructions. I have chosen this, my dear friend, after mature deliberation. The question is not at what door of Fortune's place shall we enter in, but what doors does she open for us. I was not likely to get any thing to do. I got this without any hanging-on or mortifying solicitation; it is immediate bread, and though poor in comparison of the last eighteen months of my existence, 'tis luxury in comparison of all my preceeding life."

Nor did he withhold the tidings of his appointment from Mrs. Dunlop:—"I thought thirty-five pounds a year no bad *dernier resort* for a poor poet, if Fortune, in her jade tricks, should kick him down from the little eminence to which she has lately helped him up." Gauger is a word of mean sound, nor is the calling a popular one; yet the situation is neither so humble, nor the emoluments so trifling, as some of the Poet's southern admirers have supposed. A guager's income in those days, on the banks of Nith, was equal to three hundred a year at present in London; an excise officer is the companion of gentlemen; he is usually a well-informed person, and altogether fifty per cent. above the ordinary excise officers on the banks of the Thames. It is true, that Burns sometimes speaks with levity of his situation, but that is no proof of his contempt for it; he loved in verse to hover between jest and earnest; and if he thought peevishly about it at all, it was in comparison of a place such as his genius merited. Having secured the excise appointment, and, on the 13th of March, 1788, bargained with Mr. Millar of Dalswinton for the farm of Ellisland, in Nithsdale, he resolved to bid Edinburgh farewell.

The Poet, it is said, visited the graves of Ramsay and Fergusson, then took leave of some friends by letter, and waited upon others: among the latter were Blair, Stewart, Tyler, Mackenzie, and Blacklock. I have heard that his reception was not so cordial as formerly; it would seem that his free way of speaking and free way of living had touched them somewhat. That Burns wrote joyous

letters, uttered unguarded speeches when the wine-cup went round, and was now and then to be found in the company of writers' clerks, country lairds, and west country farmers, is very true, and could not well be otherwise. He was educated in a less courtly school than professors and divines: mechanics and farmers had been his associates from his cradle. The language of a farmer's fire-side is less polished and more natural than that of the college; he spoke the language of a different class of people, and he kept their company because he was one of them. Genius had ranked him with the highest; but it was the pleasure of fortune or his country to keep him at the plough. The man who got his education in the furrowed field—whose eloquence sprung from the barn and the forge,

"When ploughmen gather with their graith,"

and who wrote not classic verse, but "hamely western jingle," could not by any possibility please, by his conversation or his way of life, the polished, the polite, and the fastidious. That Burns appeared fierce and rude in their eyes, is as true as that they seemed to him "sweet curd of asses milk,"—learnedly dull and hypocritically courteous.

It was not unknown to the literati and the lords of Edinburgh, that Burns kept a memorandum-book, in which he not only noted down his Border and his Highland tours, but introduced full-length portraits of all the eminent persons whom he chanced to meet or with whom he associated.—"I will sketch," said he, "every character that any way strikes me, to the best of my power, with unshrinking justice. I will insert anecdotes and take down remarks in the old law-phrase, without feud or favor. My own private story likewise, my love adventures, my rambles; the frowns and smiles of fortune on my bardship; my poems and fragments, that must never see the light, shall be occasionally inserted." He kept this formidable book so little of a secret, that he allowed a visitor sometimes to take a look at his gallery of portraits, and as he distributed light and shade with equal freedom and force, it was soon bruited abroad that Burns had drawn stern likenesses of his chief friends and bene-

factors. This book is not now to be found; it was carried away from the Poet's lodgings by one of his visitors who refused to restore it—enlisted in the artillery—sailed for Gibraltar, and died about the year 1800. From what remains, the following characters are extracted; they make us regret the loss of the rest:—

"With Dr. Blair I am much at my ease; I never respect him with humble veneration; but when he kindly interests himself in my welfare—or, still more, when he descends from his pinnacle and meets me on equal ground in conversation, my heart overflows with what is called liking. When he neglects me for the mere carcase of greatness, or when his eye measures the difference of our points of elevation, I say to myself, with scarcely any emotion, what do I care for him or his pomp either? It is not easy forming an exact judgment of any one, but in my opinion, Dr. Blair is merely an astonishing proof what industry and application can do. Natural parts, like his, are frequently to be met with; his vanity is proverbially known among his acquaintance, but he is justly at the head of what may be called fine writing; and a critic of the first, the very first rank in prose; even in poetry, a bard of nature's making can alone take the pass of him. He has a heart not of the very finest water, but far from being an ordinary one."

Other characters were sketched with still greater freedom. Here is his satiric portrait of a celebrated lawyer:—

"He clench'd his pamphlets in his fist,
He quoted an' he hinted,
Till in a declamation-mist
His argument he tint it;
He graped fort, he gaped fort,
He found it was awa, man,
And when his common-sense came short,
He eked it out wi' law, man."

The literati of Edinburgh were not displeased, it is likely, when he went away: nor were the titled part of the community without their share in this silent rejoicing; his presence was a reproach to them. "The illustrious of his native land, from whom he looked for patronage," had proved that they had the carcase of greatness, but wanted the soul: they subscribed for his poems, and looked on

their generosity as "an alms could keep a god alive." He turned his back on Edinburgh, and from that time forward scarcely counted that man his friend, who spoke of titled persons in his presence. Whilst sailing on pleasure's sea in a gilded barge, with perfumed and lordly company, he was, in the midst of his enjoyment, thrown roughly overboard, and had to swim to a barren shore, or sink for ever.

Burns now turned his steps westward. In one of his desponding moods he had lately said to a corespondent, "There are just two creatures that I would envy—a horse in his wild state traversing the forests of Asia, or an oyster on some of the desert shores of Europe; the one has not a wish without enjoyment, the other has neither wish nor fear." In the same mingled spirit of despair and pleasure he complains—"I lie so miserably open to the inroads and incursions of a mischievous, light-armed, well-mounted banditti, under the banners of imagination, whim, caprice, and passion; and the heavy-armed veteran regulars of wisdom, prudence, and forethought, move so very, very slow, that I am almost in a state of perpetual warfare, and, alas! frequent defeat." The thoughts of home, of a settled purpose in life, gave him a silent gladness of heart, such as he had never before known; and, to use his own words, he moved homeward with as much hilarity in his gait and countenance "as a May-frog, leaping across the newly harrowed ridge, enjoying the fragrance of the refreshed earth after the long-expected shower." He reached Mauchline towards the close of April: he was not a moment too soon; the intercourse which in his visits to Ayrshire, he had renewed with Jean Armour, exposed her once more to the reproaches of her family;—she might say, in the affecting words of one whose company had brought both joy and woe—

> "My father put me frae his door,
> My friends they hae disown'd me a';
> But I hae ane will take my part—
> The bonnie lad that's far awa."

On his arrival he took her by the hand, and was remarried according to the simple and effectual form of the

laws of Scotland:—"Daddie Auld," and his friends of the Old Light, felt every wish to be moderate with one whose powers of derision had been already proved. He next introduced Mrs. Burns to his friends, both in person and by letter. Much of his correspondence of this period bears evidence of the peace of mind and gladness of heart which this two-fold act of love and generosity had brought to him.

To Mrs. Dunlop, he says, "I found a once much-loved, and still much-loved female, literally and truly cast out to the mercy of the naked elements; there is no sporting with a fellow-creature's happiness or misery.—The most placid good-nature and sweetness of disposition; a warm heart, gratefully devoted with all its powers to love me; vigorous health, and sprightly cheerfulness, set off to the best advantage by a more than commonly handsome figure; these, I think, in a woman, may make a good wife, though she should never have read a page but the Scriptures, nor have danced in a brighter assembly than a penny-pay wedding. To jealousy or infidelity I am an equal stranger: my preservative from the first is the most thorough consciousness of her sentiments of honor and her attachment to me; my antidote against the last is my long and deep-rooted affection for her. In housewife matters, of aptness to learn and activity to execute she is eminently mistress; and, during my absence, she is regularly and constantly apprentice to my mother and sisters in their dairy, and other rural business. The Muses must not be offended when I tell them the concerns of my wife and family will in my mind always take the pass; but, I assure them, their ladyships will ever come next in place. You are right that a bachelor state would have insured me more friends; but, from a cause you will easily guess, conscious peace in the enjoyment of my own mind, and unmistrusting confidence in approaching my God, would seldom have been of the number."

On the same interesting topic he writes to Margaret Chalmers:—"I have married my Jean. I had a long and much-loved fellow-creature's happiness or misery in my determination, and I durst not trifle with so important a

deposit, nor have I any cause to repent it. If I have not got polite tittle-tattle, modish manners, and fashionable dress, I am not sickened and disgusted with the multiform curse of boarding-school affectation; and I have got the handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and kindest heart in the country. A certain late publication of Scots poems she has perused very devoutly, and all the ballads in the country, as she has the finest wood-note wild I ever heard. I am the more particular in this lady's character, as I know she will henceforth have a share in your best wishes."

These letters, and others in the same strain, have misled Walker into the belief, that Burns married Jean Armour from a sentiment of duty rather than a feeling of love; no belief can be more imaginary. The unfortunate story of his affection had been told to the world both in prose and verse; he was looked upon as one deserted by the object of his regard, under circumstances alike extraordinary and painful. That he forgave her for the sad requital of his love, and her relations for their severity, and sought her hand and their alliance, required something like apology to his friends. I see nothing in these letters out of harmony with affection and love.—"That he originally loved his Jean," says the Professor, "is not to be doubted; but, on considering all the circumstances of the case, it may be presumed that, when he first proposed marriage, it was partly from a desire to repair the injury of her reputation, and that his distress, on her refusal, proceeded as much from wounded pride as from disappointed love." The best answer to this is afforded by the words of the Poet. He loved her, he never had ceased to love her; he considered her sacrifice of him as made to the pious feelings and authority of her father:—"I can have no nearer idea," he says, "of the place of eternal punishment, than what I have felt in my own breast on her account. Never man loved, or rather adored a woman more than I did her, and I do still love her to distraction after all." If this is not the language of ardent love, I know not what it means.

But the Professor seems desirous of proving that this change in the Poet's affections was the necessary result

of being exposed to the allurements of the high-bred dames of Edinburgh.—"The three years that succeeded," he observes, "had opened to him a new scene: and the female society to which they had introduced him was of a description altogether different from any which he had formerly known."—"Between the man of rustic life," says Burns, after his arrival in Edinburgh, "and the polite world, I observed little difference. In the former, though unpolished by fashion, and unenlightened by science, I had found much observation and much intelligence. But a refined and accomplished woman was a being altogether new to me, and of which I had formed but a very inadequate idea." It is plain that the Poet, when he uttered these words, was close at the ear of one of those "high-exalted courteous dames," and making himself acceptable to her by flattery and by eloquence. It is also evident that the Professor's notions of love were not at all poetic. To regulate our affections according as knowledge raises woman in the scale, is paying a very pretty compliment to education; but it is most unjust to nature. True love pays no regard to such distinctions. We see a form—we see a face, which awaken emotions within us never before felt. The form is not perhaps the most perfect, nor the face the most fair in the land; yet we persist in admiring—in loving them:—in short, we have found out by the free-masonry of feeling, the help-mate which Heaven designed for us, and we woo and win our object.

But in what were the ladies of the polished circles of the land superior to a well-favored, well-formed, well-bred lass of low degree, who had a light foot for a dance, a melodious voice for a song, two witching eyes, with wit at will, and who believed the man who loved her to be the greatest genius in the world! These are captivating qualities to all, save those who weigh the merits of woman in a golden balance. Nay, in the very thing on which the Professor imagines a high and polished dame to be strong, she will be found weak. The shepherd maidens and rustic lasses of Scotland feel, from their unsophisticated state of mind, the beauty of the poetry of Burns deeply and devoutly; for once that a song of his

is heard in the lighted hall, it is heard fifty times on the brook-banks and in the pastoral valleys of the land.

His marriage reconciled the Poet to his wife's kindred. There was no wedding-portion. Armour was a most respectable man, but not opulent. He gave his daughter some small store of plenishing; and, exerting his skill as a mason, wrought his already eminent son-in-law a handsome punch-bowl in Inverary marble, which Burns lived to fill often, to the great pleasure both of himself and his friends. To make bridal-presents is a practice of long standing in Scotland; and it is to the credit of the personal character of the Poet that he was not forgotten.—Mrs. Dunlop bethought her of Ellisland, and gave a beautiful heifer:—another friend contributed a plough. The young couple, from a love of country, ordered their furniture—plain, indeed, and homely—from Morison, a wright in Mauchline: the farm-servants, male and female, were hired in Ayrshire, a matter of questionable prudence; for the mode of cultivation is different from that of the west, and the cold humid bottom of Mossgiel bears no resemblance to the warm and stony loam of Ellisland.

PART III:—ELLISLAND.

In the month of May, 1788, Burns made his appearance as a farmer in Nithsdale; his fame had flown before him, and his coming was expected. Ellisland is beautifully situated on the south side of the Nith, some six miles above Dumfries: it joins the grounds of Friars-Carse, on the north-west—the estate of Isle towards the south-east—the great road from Glasgow separates it from the hills of Dunscore; while the Nith, a pure stream running over the purest gravel, divides it from the holms and groves of Dalswinton. The farm amounts to upwards of a hundred acres, and is part holm and part croftland; the former, a deep rich loam, bears fine tall crops of wheat; the latter, though two-thirds loam and one-third stones on a bottom of gravel, yields, when carefully cultivated, good crops both of potatoes and corn; yet to

a stranger the soil must have looked unpromising or barren; and Burns declared, after a shower had fallen on a field of new-sown and new-rolled barley, that it looked like a paved street.

Though he got possession of the farm in May, the rent did not commence till Martinmas, as the ground was unenclosed and the houses unbuilt. By the agreement, Millar granted to Burns four nineteen years' leases of Ellisland, at an annual rent for the first three years of fifty pounds, and seventy pounds for the remaining seventy-three years of the tack: the Poet undertook, for a sum not exceeding three hundred pounds, to build a complete farm onstead, consisting of dwelling-house, barn, byre, stable, and sheds, and to permit the proprietor to plant with forest trees the scaur or precipitous bank along the side of the Nith, and a belt of ground towards Friars-Carse, of not more than two acres, in order to shelter the farm from the sweep of the north-west wind. Burns was assisted in the choice of the farm, and the terms on which it was taken, by one or two Ayrshire friends: there were other farms to let of a superior kind on the estate, and those were pointed out by my father, steward to the proprietor—a Lothian farmer of skill and experience—but the fine romantic look of Ellisland induced Burns to shut his eyes on the low-lying and fertile Foregirth; upon which my father said, "Mr. Burns, you have made a poet's—not a farmer's choice."

The Poet was now a busy and a happy man. He had houses to build, and grounds to enclose:—that he might be near both, he sought shelter in a low smoky hovel on the skirts of his farm. There he was to be found by all who had curiosity or taste, with a table, books, and drawings before him; sometimes writing letters about the land, and the people among whom he had dropt like a slung stone; sometimes giving audience to workmen who were busy at dyking or digging foundations; and not unfrequently brushing up, as Mrs. Burns said, an old song for Johnson's Musical Museum.—"The hovel which I shelter in," said the Poet to Margaret Chalmers, "is pervious to every blast that blows, and every shower that falls; and I am only preserved from being chilled to

death by being suffocated with smoke. I do not find my farm that pennyworth I was taught to expect, but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain."

If Burns had little comfort in his lodging place, he seems to have been unfortunate in finding society to render it endurable.—"I am here," he says, "on my farm; but for all that pleasurable part of life called social communication, I am at the very elbow of existence. The only things that are to be found in perfection in this country are stupidity and canting. Prose they only know in graces and prayers; and the value of these they estimate as they do their plaiding-webs—by the ell. As for the Muses, they have as much an idea of a rhinoceros as of a poet. For my old capricious, but good-natured hussy of a muse—

'By banks of Nith I sat and wept,
When Coila I thought on;
In midst thereof I hung my harp
The willow trees upon.'

I am generally about half my time in Ayrshire with my 'darling Jean;' and then I, at lucid intervals, throw my horny fist across my be-cobwebbed lyre, much in the same manner as an old wife throws her hand across the spokes of her spinning-wheel."

Nor did his neighbours gain on him by a closer acquaintance.—"I was yesterday," he says, "at Mr. Millar's, to dinner, for the first time. My reception was to my mind—from the lady of the house quite flattering. She sometimes hits on a couplet or two impromptu. She repeated one or two to the admiration of all present; my suffrage, as a professional man, was expected; I for once went agonizing over the belly of my conscience. Pardon me my adored household gods, independence of spirit and integrity of soul! In the course of the conversation, Johnson's Musical Museum, a collection of Scottish songs, with the music, was talked of. We got a song on the harpsichord, beginning

'Raving winds around her blowing.'

The air was much admired: the lady of the house asked me whose were the words—'Mine, madam; they are,

indeed, my very best verses.' She took not the smallest notice of them. The old Scottish proverb says well—'King's chaff is better than other folk's corn.' I was going to make a New Testament quotation about 'casting pearls;' but that would be too virulent, for the lady is actually a woman of sense and taste."

The sooty shealing in which the Poet found refuge seems to have infected his whole atmosphere of thought; the Maxwells, the Kirkpatricks, and Dalzells were fit companions for any man in Scotland in point of courtesy and information, and they were almost his neighbours; Riddell, of Friars-Carse, an accomplished antiquarian, lived next door; and Jean Lindsay, and her husband Patrick Millar, were no ordinary people. The former was beautiful and accomplished; wrote easy and graceful verses, and had a natural dignity in her manners which became her station: the latter was one of the most remarkable men of his time; an improver and inventor, and the first who applied steam to the purposes of navigation. Burns was resolved to be discontented—at least on paper—for in his conversation he exhibited no symptoms of the kind; but talked, laughed, jested, and visited with the ease and air of a man happy and full of hope.

The walls of the Poet's onstead began now to be visible from the north side of the Nith, and the rising structures were visited by all who were desirous of seeing how he wished to house himself. The plans were simple: the barn seemed too small for the extent of the farm, and the house for the accommodation of a large family. It contained an ample kitchen, which was to serve for dining-room; a room to hold two beds, a closet to hold one, and a garret, coom-cieled, to contain others for the female servants. One of the windows looked down the holms, another opened on the river, and the house stood so nigh the lofty bank that its afternoon shadow fell across the stream upon the opposite fields. The garden was a little way from the house; a pretty footpath led southward along the river side; another ran northward, affording fine views of the Nith, and of the groves of Friars-Carse and Dalswinton; while, half-way down the steep declivity, a fine, clear, cool spring supplied water to the house-

hold. The situation was picturesque, and at the same time convenient for the purposes of the farm.

During the progress of the work, Burns was often to be found walking among the men, urging them on, and eyeing with an anxious look the tedious process of uniting lime and stone. On laying the foundation he took off his hat, and asked a blessing on the home which was to shelter his household gods. I inquired of the man who told me this, if Burns did not put forth his hand and help him in the progress of the work ?—"Ay, that he did mony a time. If he saw us like to be beat wi' big stanehe would cry, 'bide a wee!' and come rinning. We soon found out when he put to his hand—he beat a' I ever met for a dour lift." When the walls rose as high as the window-heads, he sent a note into Dumfries ordering wood for the interior lintels. Twenty carpenters flocked round the messenger, all eager to look at the Poet's hand-writing. In such touches the admiration of the country is well expressed.

These days have been numbered by Currie among the golden days of Burns. Few of his days were golden, and most of them were full of trouble; but his period of truest happiness seems to have been that which preceded and followed the first Edinburgh edition of his poems. Those were, it is true, days of feverish enjoyment; but the tide of his fortune, or at least of his hopes, was at the full. The way before him was all sunshine; and as his ambition was equal to his genius, he indulged in splendid visions of fame and glory. The neglect of the Scottish nobles rebuked his spirit; he came to Dumfrieshire a saddened and dissatisfied man; he saw that his bread must be gained by the sweat of his brow; that the original curse, from which men without a moiety of his intellect were relieved, had fallen heavy upon him; and that he must plod labor's dull, weary round, like an ox in a threshing-mill. The happiness present to his fancy now was less bright and ethereal than before; he had to hope for heavy crops, rising markets, and fortunate bargains. At a harvest-home or a penny-wedding he might expect to have his health drank, and hear one of his songs sung; but this was not enough to satisfy ambition such as his. Among the rising walls of his onstead, he

"Cheeped like some bewildered chicken,
Scared frae its minnie and the cleckin'
By hoodie craw."

and complained to Mrs. Dunlop of the uncouth cares and novel plans which hourly insulted his awkward ignorance. These uncouth cares were the labors of a farm, and the novel plans were the intricate and laborious elegancies of a plain onstead!

I have heard my father allege that Burns looked like a man restless and of unsettled purpose.—"He was ever on the move," said he, "on foot or on horseback. In the course of a single day he might be seen holding the plough, angling in the river, sauntering with his hands behind his back on the banks, looking at the running water, of which he was very fond, walking round his buildings, or over his fields; and if you lost sight of him for an hour, perhaps you might see him returning from Friars-Carse, or spurring his horse through the Nith to spend an evening in some distant place with such friends as chance threw in his way." The account which he gives of himself is much to the same purpose.—"There is," said he, "a foggy atmosphere native to my soul in the hour of care, which makes the dreary objects seem larger than life. Extreme sensibility, irritated and prejudiced on the gloomy side by a series of misfortunes and disappointments at that period of my existence when the soul is laying in her cargo of ideas for the voyage of life, is, I believe, the principal cause of this unhappy frame of mind."

He loved to complain:—"My increasing cares," he says, "in this as yet strange country—gloomy conjectures in the dark vista of futurity—consciousness of my own inability for the struggle of the world—my broadened mark to misfortune in a wife and children—I could indulge these reflections till my humor should ferment into the most acid chagrin that would corrode the very thread of life." These are the sentiments of one resolved not to be comforted.—"The heart of the man, and the fancy of the poet, are the two grand considerations," he observed, "for which I live. If miry ridges and dirty dunghills are to engross the best part of the functions of my soul im-

mortal, I had better been a rook or a magpie at once, and then I should not have been plagued with any ideas superior to breaking of clods and picking up grubs, not to mention barn-door cocks or mallards—creatures with which I could almost exchange lives at any time." To Margaret Chalmers he writes in a mood a shade or so brighter:—"When I think I have met with you, and have lived more of real life with you in eight days than I can do with almost any body I meet with in eight years; when I think on the improbability of meeting you in this world again—I could sit down and cry like a child." After this we are scarcely prepared for his saying, "you will be pleased to hear that I have laid aside idle éclat, and bind every day after my reapers."

Between the farm of Ellisland and the village of Mauchline lies a dreary road, forty-six miles long; and along this not very romantic path Burns was in the habit of riding more frequently than was for the advantage of his pocket or his farm. It is true that it was Mrs. Burns who made him look to the west, and it is also true that a man should love and honor his wife; but it seems not to have occurred to the Poet that strict economy and a vigilant look-out upon his farming operations was the most substantial way of paying respect to her. His jaunts were frequent; he tarried long, and there were pleasant lingerings by the way—brought about by inclination sometimes, and sometimes by wind and rain. All this was much to be regretted, and it arose mainly from want of a residence for Mrs. Burns and his children near the farm which he superintended. He complains to Ainslie of want of time. He was not one of those who could sit quietly and let matters take their course: he had all the impatience of genius and not a little of its irritability.

In one of his Ayrshire excursions, he found the inn at which he usually got a night's lodging filled with mourners conveying the body of a lady of some note in the west to her family tomb; he was obliged to ride ten miles to another inn. The fruit of his vexation was an ode lavish of insult:—

"Dweller in yon dungeon dark,
Hangman of creation, mark

Who in widowed weeds appears,
Laden with unhonored years.
Note that eye—'tis rheum o'erflows—
Pity's flood there never rose:
See those hands, ne'er stretched to save;
Hands that took, but never gave."

In these words, and others bitterer still, the Poet avenged himself on the memory of a frugal and respectable lady, whose body unconsciously deprived him of a night's sleep.

Some will like better, some worse, the reproof which he gave to Kirkpatrick, the minister of Dunscore, for preaching down "the bloody and tyrannical house of Stuart." The Poet went to the parish church to join in acknowledgments for the Revolution to which we are indebted for civil and religious rights. The stern and uncompromising divine touched the yet lingering jacobitical prejudices of Burns so sharply, that he seemed ready to start from his seat and leave the church.

On going home he wrote thus to the London Star: —"Bred and educated in revolution principles—the principles of reason and common sense—it could not be any silly prejudice which made my heart revolt at the abusive manner in which the reverend gentleman threatened the house of Stuart. We may rejoice sufficiently in our deliverance from past evils without cruelly raking up the ashes of those whose misfortune it was, perhaps, as much as their crime, to be the authors of those evils. The Stuarts only contended for prerogatives which they knew their predecessors enjoyed, and which they saw their contemporaries enjoying; but these prerogatives were inimical to the happiness of a nation, and the rights of subjects. Whether it was owing to the wisdom of leading individuals, or to the jostling of parties, I cannot pretend to determine: but, happily for us, the kingly power was shifted into another branch of the family, who, as they owed the throne solely to the call of a free people, could claim nothing inconsistent with the covenanted terms which placed them there. Let every man who has a tear for the many miseries incident to humanity, feel for a family illustrious as any in Europe, and unfortunate beyond historic precedent; and let every Briton, and par-

ticularly every Scotchman, who ever looked with reverential pity on the dotage of a parent, cast a veil over the fatal mistakes of the kings of his forefathers."

The eloquent humanity of this appeal was thrown away, perhaps, upon an intrepid Calvinist, to whom the good things of this world were as dust in the balance compared to what he deemed his duty to God and his conscience. —"You must have heard," says Burns in a letter to Nicol, "how Lawson of Kirkmahoe seconded by Kirkpatrick of Dunscore, and the rest of that faction, have accused, in formal process, the unfortunate Heron of Kirkgunzeon, that, in ordaining Neilson to the cure of souls in Kirkbean, he feloniously and treasonably bound him to the Confession of Faith, as far as it was agreeable to reason and the word of God." The Poet was unfortunate in his respect for those Galloway apostles: for worth and true nobleness of mind, Lawson and Kirkpatrick were as high above them as Criffel is above Solway. He was wayward and scarcely to be trusted in his arguments on religious topics: —a Cameronian boasted to me how effectually Burns interposed between him and two members of the established kirk, who were crushing him with a charge of heresy.— "The Poet," said he, "proved the established kirk to be schismatic, and the poor broken remnant to be the true light. Never believe me if he wasna a gude man."

A secluded walk, or a solitary ride, were to Burns what the lonely room and the evening lamp are said to be to others who woo the muse. Though sharp and sarcastic in his correspondence, he was kindly and obliging in other matters. He had formed a friendship with the family of Friars-Carse, and was indulged with a key which admitted him when he pleased to the beautiful grounds—to the rare collections of antique crosses, troughs, altars, and other inscribed stones of Scotland's elder day—and to what the Poet did not love less, a beautiful hermitage, in the centre of the grove next to Ellisland. He rewarded this indulgence by writing an inscription. At first the poem was all contained on one pane of glass; but his fancy overflowed such limits :—

"Thou whom chance may hither lead,
Be thou clad in russet weed,

Be thou deck'd in silken stole,
Grave these maxims on thy soul:—
Life is but a day at most,
Sprung from night in darkness lost;
Hope not sunshine every hour;
Fear not clouds will always lower.
* * *
Stranger, go! Heaven be thy guide!
Quod the Beadsman of Nithside."

These sentiments show the color of the Poet's mind rather than its original vigor. He was happier in a poem addressed to Grahame of Fintray; it is rich in observation, and abounds with vivid pictures, some of them darkening into the stern and the sarcastic:—

"Thee, Nature! partial Nature! I arraign;
Of thy caprice maternal I complain.
Thou giv'st the ass his hide, the snail his shell,
Th' envenomed wasp victorious guards his cell;
Toads with their poison, doctors with their drug,
The priest and hedge-hog in their robes are snug,
But, oh! thou bitter step-mother, and hard
To thy poor fenceless naked child—the Bard!
A thing unteachable in worldly skill,
And half an idiot too—more helpless still;
No nerves olfactory, Mammon's trusty cur
Clad in rich Dulness' comfortable fur,
In naked feeling, and in aching pride,
He bears the unbroken blast on every side;
Vampyre booksellers drain him to the heart,
And scorpion critics cureless venom dart.
Critics!—appall'd I venture on the name;
Those cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame,
Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Monro's;
He hacks to teach—they mangle to expose."

The fine satire and graceful supplication of these lines make us regret that they were addressed to one who had nothing better in his gift than situations in the excise.

In lyrical verse the muse of Burns was at this time somewhat sparing of her inspiration; she who loved to sing of rustic happiness in her own country tongue, was put out in her musings by the sound of masons' hammers and carpenters' saws. The first of his attempts is the exquisite song called "The Chevalier's Lament;" it was partly composed on horseback, March 30, 1788.—"Yes-

terday," he says to Robert Cleghorn, "as I was riding through a track of melancholy, joyless moors, between Galloway and Ayrshire, it being Sunday, I turned my thoughts to psalms and hymns and spiritual songs; and your favorite air, 'Captain O'Keane,' coming at length in my head, I tried these words to it:—

'The small birds rejoice in the green leafs returning,
The murmuring streamlet winds clear through the vale,
The hawthorn-tree blows in the dew of the morning,
And wild scatter'd cowslips bedeck the green dale;
But what can give pleasure, or what can seem fair,
While the lingering moments are numbered by care?
No flowers gaily springing, nor birds sweetly singing,
Can soothe the sad bosom of joyless despair.'"

He contributed some dozen songs or so this season to Johnson:—"I can easily see that you will very probably," he says, "have four volumes. Perhaps you may not find your account lucrative in this business; but you are a patriot for the music of your country, and I am certain posterity will look upon themselves as highly indebted to your public spirit. I see every day new musical publications advertised, but what are they?—gaudy butterflies of a day; but your work will outlive the momentary neglects of idle fashion, and defy the teeth of time." Of the new songs which he wrote, "Beware of bonnie Ann" was the first; Ann, the daughter of Allan Masterton, was the heroine. "The Gardener wi' his Paidle" is another; the first verse is natural and flowing:—

"When rosy May comes in wi' flowers,
To deck the gay green spreading bowers,
Then busy, busy are his hours,
The gardener wi' his paidle;
The chrystal waters gently fa',
The merry birds are lovers a',
The scented breezes round him blaw,
The gardener wi' his paidle."

"On a Bank of Flowers," was written by desire of Johnson to replace a song of greater merit, but less delicacy, published by Ramsay. "The Day returns, my bosom burns," was composed in compliment to the bridal-day of the laird of Friars-Carse and his lady; it is very beautiful:—

"The day returns, my bosom burns,
The blissful day we twa did meet,
Though winter wild in tempest toil'd,
Ne'er simmer sun was half sae sweet."

"At their fire-side," says the Poet, "I have enjoyed more pleasant evenings than at all the houses of fashionable people in this country put together." "Go fetch to me a pint o' wine," Burns introduced to his brother Gilbert as an old song which he had found among the glens of Nithsdale, and asked if he did not think it beautiful.—"Beautiful?" said Gilbert, "it is not only that, but the most heroic of lyrics. Ah, Robert! if you would write oftener that way, your fame would be surer." He also copied it out, as a work of the olden muse, to Mrs. Dunlop; the second verse is magnificent:—

"The trumpets sound, the banners fly,
The glittering spears are ranked ready;
The shouts o' war are heard afar,
The battle closes thick and bloody:
But it's not the roar o' sea or shore
Wad make me longer wish to tarry,
Nor shouts o' war that's heard afar—
It's leaving thee, my bonnie Mary."

He was fond of passing off his own compositions as the labors of forgotten bards; "Auld lang syne" he spoke of to Mrs. Dunlop as a song that had often thrilled through his soul; nor did he hesitate to recommend it to Thomson as a lyric of other days which had never been in print, nor even in manuscript, till he took it down from an old woman's singing. Many a Scottish heart will respond in far lands to the following lines:—

"We twa hae run about the braes,
An' pou'd the gowans fine,
But we've wandered mony a weary foot
Since auld lang syne.
We twa hae paidlet i' the burn
Frae morning sun till dine,
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Since auld lang syne."

The desponding spirit of the Poet is visible in the song of "The lazy mist."—"I'll never wish to hear it sung again," said a farmer to me once "it is enough to make one quit plough-hilts and harrow, and turn hermit."—

"A' the airts the wind can blaw" is as cheerful as the other is sorrowful.—"I composed it," said the Poet, "out of compliment to Mrs. Burns; it was during the honeymoon." It was the fruit of one of his horseback meditations, when riding to Mossgiel from Ellisland, with his rising onstead, his new-sown crop, and the charms of Jean Armour's company in his mind. He made it by the way, and sung it to his wife when he arrived. There are four verses altogether; two of them are not commonly printed, though both are beautiful:—

"O blaw ye wastlin' winds, blaw saft
Amang the leafy trees,
And frae each fragrant hill and vale
Bring hame the laden bees;
And bring the lassie back to me
That's aye sae neat an' clean;
Ae smile o' her wou'd banish care,
Sae charming is my Jean."

The verses with which Burns eked out and amended the old lyrics are worthy of notice. There is some happy patching in "Tibbie Dunbar:"—

"I care na thy daddie, his lands and his money;
I care na thy kindred sae high and sae lordly;
But say thou wilt hae me for better for waur,
And come in thy coatie, sweet Tibbie Dunbar."

In "The Tailor fell thro' the bed, thimbles an' a;" and in "Ay waukin, O," are two or three of the Burns' touches. In "My Love she's but a lassie yet" his hand is more visible:—

"My love she's but a lassie yet,
My love she's but a lassie yet;
We'll let her stand a year or twa,
She'll no be half sae saucy yet:
I rue the day I sought her, O,
I rue the day I sought her, O;
Wha gets her need na say he's wooed,
But he may say he's bought her, O."

Having cut and secured his crop, seen his stable for holding four horses, his byre for containing ten cows erected, and his dwelling-house rendered nearly habitable, he went into Ayrshire in the middle of November, and, in the first week of the succeeding month, returned with Mrs. Burns, and some cartloads of plenishing to Ellisland.

He was visited on this occasion by many of his neighbours; the gladsome looks and the kindly manners of his young wife made a favorable impression on all; and at his house-heating, "Luck to the roof-tree of the house of Burns!" was drunk by the men, and some of his songs sung by the lasses of Nithsdale. He was looked upon now as having struck root as a poet and a farmer, and as both was welcome to the people of the vale around. Yet his coming brought something like alarm to a few: the ruder part of the peasantry dreaded being pickled and preserved in sarcastic song. An old farmer told me, that at a penny-pay wedding, when one or two wild young fellows began to quarrel and threatened to fight, Burns rose up and said, "Sit down, an' be damned to you! else I'll hing ye up like potatoe-bogles, in sang to-morrow."—"They ceased and sat down," said my informant, "as if their noses had been bleeding."

In the letters and verses of the Poet at this period, we can see a picture of his mind and feelings.—"I own myself," said he, "so little of a Presbyterian, that I approve of set times and seasons of more than ordinary acts of devotion. This day (January 1, 1789), the first Sunday in May; a breezy, blue-skyed noon, sometime about the beginning, and a hoary morning and calm sunny day about the end of autumn; these, time out of mind, have been to me a kind of holiday. We know nothing, or next to to nothing, of the substance or structure of our souls, so cannot account for those seeming caprices in them, that one should be particularly pleased with this thing, or struck with that, which, on minds of a different cast, make no extraordinary impression. I have some favorite flowers in spring, among which are the mountain-daisy, the harebell, the foxglove, the wild-brier-rose, the budding birch, and the hoary hawthorn, that I view and hang over with particular delight. I never hear the loud solitary whistle of the curlew in a summer noon, or the wild mixing cadence of a troop of grey plovers in an autumnal morning, without feeling an elevation of soul like the enthusiasm of devotion or poetry. Do these workings argue something within us above the trodden clod? I own myself partial to such

proofs of those awful and important realities—a God that made all things—man's immaterial and immortal nature and a world of weal or woe beyond death and the grave." Thus eloquently could Burns discourse upon his own emotions; he was willing to accept, as proofs of an immortal spirit within him, the poetic stirrings of his own sensibility.

That Burns imagined he had united the poet, farmer, and exciseman all happily in his own person, was a dream in which he indulged only during the first season that he occupied Ellisland. When he thought of his bargain with Millar, his natural engagement with the muse, and of his increasing family, he was not unconscious that he had taxed mind and body to the uttermost: poetry was not then, more than now, a productive commodity, and he could not expect a harvest such as he had reaped in Edinburgh every year. A farm such as his, required the closest, nay, most niggardly, economy to make it pay; and he was not, therefore, unwise in leaning to the excise to help out with a little ready and certain money the deficiencies of his other speculations. As yet, however, his hopes were high, and his spirit untouched, when he said—

> "Come, firm Resolve, take thou the van,
> Thou stalk o' carle-hemp in man:"

he was bracing himself up for the contest. Such fits of thought generally with him ushered in verse. When visions of fame and honest hard-earned independence passed before his sight, Burns slipt out to the "Scaur's red side," and pacing to and fro, indicated by the humming of some favorite tune, that he was busy with song. Nay, it was not unusual with him to go out, "attired as minstrels wont to be," with his head uncovered—his ancestor's broad sword buckled to his side; and, traversing the river-bank in the glimpses of the moon, chaunt in a voice, deep, low, and melodious the verses which rose on his fancy. In one of these moods he produced "I hae a wife o' my ain," a rude and rather indecorous ditty, but full of the character of the man, and breathing of resolution and independence:—

"I hae a penny to spend,
There—thanks to naebody:
I hae naething to lend,
I'll borrow frae naebody.

"I am naebody's lord,
I'll be slave to naebody;
I hae a gude braid sword—
I'll tak dunts frae naebody.

Burns indulged in the wish to compose a work, less desultory, and more the offspring of meditation than those short and casual pieces which were rather the sport of his vacant hours than the result of settled study and deliberate thought. Something like the "Georgics of Virgil," a kind of composition for which he was well fitted, both by genius and knowledge, seems to have hovered before his fancy.—"It is a species of writing," he observed, "entirely new to me, and has filled my head with a thousand fancies of emulation; but, alas! when I read the Georgics, and then survey my own powers, 'tis like the idea of a Shetland pony drawn up by the side of a thorough-bred hunter to start for the plate." These words were addressed to Mrs. Dunlop; he afterwards says to Dr. Moore:—"The character and employment of a poet were formerly my pleasure, but are now my pride. I have no doubt but the knack, the aptitude, to learn the Muses' trade, is a gift bestowed by Him who forms the secret bias of the soul; but I as firmly believe that excellence in the profession is the fruit of industry, attention, labor, and pains; at least, I am resolved to try my doctrine by the test of experience. Another appearance from the press I put off to a very distant day—a day that may never arrive; but poesy I am determined to prosecute with all my vigor." The critics of those days seem not to have felt that he had already taken a flight above any bard of his time; they regarded the "Address to the Deil," "The Daisy," "The Mouse," and "The Cotter's Saturday Night" as "Orient pearls at random strung;" and held that their worth had yet to be decided by future works of more sustained excellence. This seems to have perplexed Burns; such opinions pointed to a school of verse in which he had never studied.

The Poet did not flourish; yet he seems to have done

enough to ensure success as a farmer. He held the plough frequently with his own hands; and he loved to lay aside his coat, and with a sowing-sheet slung across his shoulder, stride over the new-turned furrows, and commit his seed-corn to the ground.—While his wife managed the cheese and butter department with something short of West country skill, he attended fairs where grain was sold, and sales where cattle were disposed of; and, though not averse to a merry-making or a dance, he seems neither to have courted nor shunned them.—"Do you come and see me," he says to Richard Browne; "we must have a social day, and perhaps lengthen it out with half the night before you go again to sea. You are the earliest friend I now have on earth, my brothers excepted; and is not that an endearing circumstance? When you and I first met, we were at a green period of human life. The twig could easily take a bent, but would as easily return to its former state. You and I not only took a mutual bent, but, by the melancholy though strong influence of being both of the family of the unfortunates, we were intertwined with one another in our growth towards advanced age; and blasted be the sacrilegious hand that shall attempt to undo the union!" He loved old friendships to continue, and rejoiced in the happiness of his early companions.

The diffusion of knowledge was a favorite object with Burns; for this he had established his reading and debating-clubs in the west, and in the same spirit he now desired to excite a love of literature among the portioners and peasants of Dunscore. He undertook the management of a small parochial library, and wrote out the rules. His friend Gordon, the writer, happened to drop in while he was busy with the regulations, and began to criticize the language—a matter on which the bard was sensitive. —"Come, come, sir," said he, "let me have my rules again. Had I employed a Dumfries lawyer to draw them out, he would have given me bad Latin, worse Greek, and English spoken in the fourteenth century." Mr. Riddell, of Friars-Carse, and other gentlemen, contributed money and books. The library commenced briskly, but soon languished. The Poet could not always be present at the

meetings; the subscribers lived far separate; disputes and disunion crept in, and it died away like a flower which fades for want of watering. Burns alludes ironically to the scheme in one of his letters. Wisdom, he averred, might be gained by the mere handling of books. One night, he said, while he presided in the library, a tailor, who lived some mile or so distant, turned over and over the leaves of a folio Hebrew concordance, the gift of a clergyman.—"I advised him," said Burns, "to bind the book on his back—he did so; and Stitch, in a dozen walks between the library and his own house, acquired as much rational theology as the priest had done by forty years' perusal of the pages." These sort of ironical salies were not likely to allure subscribers, or give knowledge to the ignorant.

Some have hinted that his appointment in the excise was unfortunate, as it led to the temptations of pleasant company and social excess. There is no situation under the sun free from this; even a farmer is as much exposed to such allurements as any one. The Poet, a good judge in all such matters, looked with a different eye upon it; nor is there any thing too romantic in the wish that journeying along the green vales and among the fine hills of Nithsdale and Galloway might inspire his muse, and aid him in poetic composition.—"I do not know," he said to Ainslie, "if I have informed you that I am now appointed to an excise division, in the middle of which my house and farm lie. I know not how the word exciseman, or still more opprobrious gauger, will sound in your ears. I, too, have seen the day when my auditory nerves would have felt very delicately on this subject; but a wife and children have a wonderful power in blunting these kind of sensations. Fifty pounds a year for life, and a provision for widows and orphans, you will allow, is no bad settlement for a *poet*. For the ignominy of the profession, I have the encouragement which I once heard a recruiting-serjeant give to a numerous, if not a respectable, audience in the streets of Kilmarnock:—'Gentlemen, for your farther and better encouragement, I can assure you that our regiment is the most blackguard corps under the crown; and consequently, with us, an honest man has the surest chance for preferment.'"

In the same strain he writes to his friend Blacklock:—

"But what d'ye think, my trusty frere,
I'm turned a guager.—Peace be here!
Parnassian queans, I fear, I fear,
Ye'll now disdain me,
And then my fifty pounds a year.
Will little gain me.

"Ye glaiket, gleesome, dainty damies,
Wha by Castalia's wimplin' streamies
Lowp, sing, and lave your pretty limbies,
Ye ken, ye ken,
That strang necessity supreme is
'Mang sons 'o men.

"I hae a wife and twa wee laddies,
They maun hae brose and and brats o' duddies;
Ye ken yourself' my heart right proud is—
I need na vaunt;
But I'll sned besoms thraw saugh woodies,
Before they want."

In these verses we read of the man as well as the Poet; he put more of himself into all he wrote than any other poet ancient or modern.

"His farm," says Currie, "no longer occupied the principal part of his care or his thoughts. It was not at Ellisland that he was now in general to be found.—Mounted on horseback, this high-minded Poet was pursuing the defaulters of the revenue among the hills and vales of Nithsdale, his roving eye wandering over the charms of nature, and muttering his wayward fancies as he moved along." Currie means something like censure in this passage. The Poet had a duty, and an arduous one, to perform; his district reached far and wide; he was ever punctual in his attendance, and though he might plough and sow, reap and graze, Ellisland by deputy; it required his own eyes and hands to superintend the revenue in ten parishes. That he acquitted himself diligently, but gently, in his vocation, there is abundance of proof; against the regular smuggler his looks were stern and his hand was heavy, while to the poor country dealer he was mild and lenient. The Poet and a brother exciseman one day suddenly entered a widow woman's shop in Dunscore, and made a seizure of smuggled tobacco. —"Jenny," said the Poet, "I expected this would be

the upshot; here, Lewars, take note of the number of rolls as I count them. Now, Jock, did ye ever hear an auld wife numbering her threads before check-reels were invented? Thou's ane, and thou's no ane, and thou's ane a' out—listen." As he handed out the rolls, he went on with his humorous enumeration, but dropping every other roll into Janet's lap. Lewars took the desired note with much gravity, and saw as if he saw not the merciful conduct of his companion. Another information had been lodged against a widow who kept a small public-house in Thornhill; it was a fair-day—her house was crowded—Burns came suddenly to the back door and said, "Kate, are ye mad?—the supervisor and me will be in on ye in half an hour!" This merciful hint—out of which a very serious charge might be made—saved the poor woman from ruin.

The muse, as he expected, accompanied Burns in his guaging excursions. He had occasion to be at Lochmaben; Maxwell, then provost of that very small but very ancient borough, was his correspondent:—he was also acquainted with that "worthy veteran in religion and good fellowship, the Reverend Mr. Jeffrey." At the manse of the latter, he met "the blue-ey'd lass" in his daughter Jean, then a rosy girl of seventeen, with winning manners and laughing blue eyes. The Poet drank tea and spent the evening in the manse; and next morning, greatly to the increase of her blushes, sent her the song which has made her immortal:—

"I gaed a waefu' gate yestreen,
A gate, I fear, I'll dearly rue;
I gat my death frae twa sweet een,
Twa laughing een o' bonnie blue:
She talk'd, she smiled, my heart she wiled,
She charm'd my soul, I wist na how;
But aye the stound, the deadly wound,
Came frae her een sae bonnie blue."

In April, he wrote the Poem of "The wounded hare;" he has himself described the circumstances under which he composed it; his account was confirmed to me by James Thomson, the son of a neighbouring farmer.—"I remember Burns," said he, "weel; I have some cause to mind him—he used to walk in the twilight along the

side of the Nith, near the march, between his land and ours. Once I shot at a hare that was busy on our braird; she ran bleeding past Burns; he cursed me and ordered me out of his sight, else he would throw me into the water. I'm told he has written a poem about it."—"Aye that he has," I replied; "but do you think he would have thrown you into the Nith?—"Thrown! aye, I'll warrant would he, though I was baith young and strong." He submitted the Poem—certainly not one of his best—to Dr. Gregory; the result scared him from consulting in future professional critics.—"I believe," he said "in the iron justice of Dr. Gregory; but I believe and tremble." Such criticisms tend to crush the spirit of man.

The applause which his next attempt obtained, afforded some consolation for such merciless strictures; this was the song "O! were I on Parnassus' hill;" the heroine was Mrs. Burns; the transition from the "forked hill" and "fabled fount" of the heathen to a nearer stream and Scottish mount of inspiration, has been much admired.

"O! were I on Parnassus' hill,
Or had o' Helicon my fill,
That I might catch poetic skill,
To sing how dear I love thee;
But Nith maun be my muse's well,
My muse maun be thy bonnie sel',
On Corsincon I'll glow'r and spell,
And write how dear I love thee."

He presented the song to Miss Staig, an accomplished young lady of Dumfries, saying, "should the respectful timidity of any one of her lovers deny him power of speech, it would be charitable to teach him 'O! were I on Parnassus' hill,' so that he might not lie under the double imputation of being neither able 'to sing nor say.'"

The thoughts of Burns had travelled far from Corsincon and the waters of the Nith, when he wrote "My heart's in the Highlands." The words suit a Gaelic air, and have much of the northern spirit in them.—

"My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;
My heart's in the Highlands a chasing the deer,
A chasing the wild deer and following the roe;
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go."

Nor were his thoughts at his own fire-side when he penned his humorous and sarcastic ditty, "Whistle owre the lave o't." Wedded infelicity is the theme of many of our old minstrels :—

"Meg was meek and Meg was mild,
Sweet and harmless as a child—
Wiser men than me's beguiled;
Whistle owre the lave o't."

His fancy was now and then fond of "stepping westward;" this is sufficiently indicated in his "Braes o' Ballochmyle," a strain which appears to intimate that he had overlooked the neglect which wounded him in "The Lass o' Ballochmyle;" and with deeper feeling still in his "To Mary in heaven," written near the close of September, 1789. The circumstances under which the latter lyric was composed pressed painfully on the mind of his wife.—"Robert," she said, "though ill of a cold, had busied himself all day with the shearers in the field, and, as he had got much of the crop in, was in capital spirits. But when the gloaming came, he grew sad about something—he could not rest. He wandered first up the water-side, and then went to the barn-yard; and I followed him, begging him to come in, as he was ill, and the air was cold and sharp. He always promised, but still remained where he was, striding up and down, and looking at the clear sky, and particularly at a star that shone like another moon. He then threw himself down on some loose sheaves, still continuing to gaze at the star." When he came in he seemed deeply dejected, and sat down and wrote the first verse :—

"Thou lingering star, with lessening ray,
That lov'st to greet the early morn,
Again thou usherest in the day
My Mary from my soul was torn.
O Mary! dear departed shade!
Where is thy place of blissful rest?
Seest thou thy lover lowly laid?
Hearest thou the groans that rend his breast?"

On this touching topic he writes to Mrs. Dunlop :—"Can it be possible that, when I resign this frail feverish being, I shall still find myself in conscious existence? When the last gasp of agony has announced that I am no

more to those who knew me, and the few who loved me; when the cold unconscious corse is resigned to the earth to be the prey of reptiles, and become a trodden clod, shall I be yet warm in life, seeing and seen—enjoying and enjoyed? If there is another life, it must be only for the just, the benevolent, the amiable, and the humane. What a flattering idea, then, is a world to come! There shall I, with speechless agony of rapture, again recognise my lost—my ever dear Mary! whose bosom was fraught with truth, honor, constancy, and love." Few wives would interpret these melancholy allusions into happiness for themselves. Mrs. Burns seems to have conducted herself with much gentleness.

These melancholy moods seldom lasted long—and they were generally relieved by verse. Poetry, therefore, had some share in them. Nor was it unnatural, when the world pressed and the cloud descended, for Burns to cheer the present by bright images of the past. Had fortune been more kind, he would have looked less at the Highland-Mary star, and indulged, probably, in strains of a a more enlivening nature. In those days the Poet describes himself as the prey of nervous affections.—"I cannot reason," he says, "I cannot think; I would not venture to write any thing above an order to a cobbler. You have felt too much of the ills of life not to sympathize with a diseased wretch, who is impaired in more than half of any faculties he possessed."

Yet in the same season he wrote his joyous strain, "Willie brewed a peck o' maut." The history of the song involves that of the Poet. Nicol, by the advice of Burns, bought the farm of Laggan in his neighbourhood, and in the autumn vacation came to look after his purchase.—Allan Masterton accompanied him, and summoning the bard, they resolved to have a "house-heating." Nicol furnished the table, Burns produced the song, and Masterton set it to music. All these lyrics, and others of scarcely inferior merit, were printed in the third volume of the Musical Museum. The song called "The banks of Nith" partakes of the sobriety of verses written to please a friend. In vain the Poet thinks of Thames flowing proudly to the sea, and of the Nith,

"Where Comyns ance had high command."

His muse will not be satisfied till he gives her license upon another strain—the song of "Tam Glen." Thought flows free, and words "come skelpin' rank and file," in this happy lyric. The heroine has set her heart on honest Tam, and, in spite of the persuasions and bribes of her relations, perseveres in her attachment. Besides his personal qualities, there are other reasons of weight:—

"The last Halloween I was wauken,
My drouket sark-sleeve, as ye ken;
His likeness came up the house stauken—
The very grey breeks o' Tam Glen."

Burns went to a school in which the master caused his scholars to sing this song. The Poet was hard to please in matters of sentiment, and said, "Children can't do such things, sir; they sing, but it is without feeling."

He had now made the acquaintance and acquired the friendship of some of the chief families in the vale of Nith; the doors of Friars-Carse, Terraughty, Blackwood, Closeburn, Barjarg, Dalswinton, Glenae, Kirkconnel, and Arbigland were opened to receive and to welcome him; nor were those of Drumlanrig shut. The Duke of Queensberry was represented by John M'Murdo, who had taste to appreciate the merits of such a man as Burns. In one of his letters to that gentleman, he says, in his usual characteristic way,—"A poet and a beggar are in so many points of view alike, that one might take them for the same individual character under different designations; were it not that though, with a trifling license, most poets may be styled beggars, yet the converse of the proposition does not hold that every beggar is a poet.—In one particular, however, they remarkably agree: if you help either the one or the other to the picking of a bone or a mug of ale, they will very willingly repay you with verse. I feel myself indebted to you, in the style of our ballad-printers, for 'five excellent new songs.'—The enclosed is nearly my newest song, 'The Country Lass,' and one that has cost me some pains, though that is but an equivocal mark of excellence. You see, sir, what it is to patronize a poet; 'tis like being a magistrate in a petty borough; you do them the favor to preside at their council for one year, and your name bears the prefatory stigma of bailie for life. With the compliments, and the

best wishes, I send the sincere prayers of the season for you, that you may see many and happy years with Mrs. M'Murdo and your family—two blessings, by-the-bye, to which your rank does not by any means entitle you; a loving wife and a fine family, being almost the only good things of this life to which the farm-house has an exclusive right."

In the midst of visits given and received—acts of kindness done by gentlemen, and words of applause, more welcome still, from ladies, Burns was thoughtful and unhappy. From the pursuit of "pension, post, or place" he had withdrawn with embittered feelings to a farm, and now he found that the plough and the sickle failed to give even the rustic abundance he had contemplated. On Ellisland he had expended all his money in the first year of occupation;—in the second year he writes,—"My mind is so jaded, and racked, and bedeviled with that task of the superlatively damned—making one guinea do the business of three, that I detest and abhor the very word business, though no less than four letters of my own short sirname are in it." He felt, too, that he had laid out his money in vain. He suspected his mistake early. It will be recollected that he said, in September, 1788, "I do not find my farm the pennyworth I was taught to expect; but I believe in time it may be a saving bargain." To Dr. Moore, in January, 1789, he says, "I have married my Jean, and taken a farm: with the first step, I have every day more and more reason to be satisfied; with the last, it is rather the reverse." Still he did not despair; nay, he sometimes saw in imagination the poet-farmer high in the scale of opulence as well as fame.—"I am here in my old way," he writes to Mr. Macauley, "holding the plough, marking the growth of my corn, or the health of my dairy, and at times sauntering by the delightful windings of the Nith, on the margin of which I have built my humble domicile, praying for seasonable weather, or holding an intrigue with the muses, the only gipsies with whom I have now any intercourse."

The new-year's-day of 1790 wrought a change in his mind, or rather confirmed his worst suspicions: he had now brought two years' crop to the flail, and was thus en-

abled to weigh the certain past against future hope. We may gather the result from his words to Gilbert:—"I have not, in my present frame of mind, much appetite for exertion in writing: my nerves are in a cursed state. I feel that horrid hypochondria pervading every atom of both body and soul. This farm has undone my enjoyment of myself; it is a ruinous affair on all hands. But let it go —I'll fight it out and be off with it." Though Ellisland promised before the fourth of the lease was done to be a saving bargain, there is no doubt that at first it was a losing one. The heart had been wrought out of the ground by preceding tenants, and the crops of grass or corn which it yielded to the Poet afforded but a bare return for labor and outlay.

The condition of a farmer in Nithsdale was in those days sufficiently humble; his one-story house had a clay floor; his furniture was made by the hands of a ploughwright; he presided at meals among his children and domestics; performed family worship "duly even and morn;" and only put on the look of a man of substance when he gave a dinner to a douce neighbour. Out of doors all was rude and slovenly: his plough was the clumsy old Scotch one; his harrows had oftener teeth of wood than of iron; his carts were heavy and low-wheeled —the axles were of wood; he winnowed his corn by means of the wind, between two barn-doors; and he refused to commit his seed to the earth till, seating himself on the ground at mid-day, it gave warmth instead of receiving it. He was too poor to make experiments, and too prejudiced to speculate. He rooted up no bushes, dug up no stones; neither did he drain nor enclose; the dung which he bestowed on the soil was to raise a crop of potatoes; now and then it received a powdering of lime. His crops corresponded with his skill and his implements; they were weak, and only enabled him to pay his rent and lay past a few pounds Scots, annually.

Much of the ground in Nithsdale was leased at seven, ten, and some fields of more than ordinary richness, at fifteen shillings an acre. The farmer differed little in wealth and condition from the peasants around him. The war, which soon commenced raised him in the scale of

existence: the army and navy consumed much of his produce; for an hundred thousand soldiers in time of war require as much provisions as two hundred thousand in times of peace. With the demand, the price of corn augmented; the farmer rose on the wings of sudden wealth above his original condition; his house obtained a slated roof and sash windows; carpets were laid on the floors, instruments of music were placed in the parlors; he wore no longer a coat of home-made cloth; he sat no longer at meals among his servants; family devotion was relinquished as a thing unfashionable, and he became a sort of rustic gentleman, who rode a blood-horse, and galloped home on market-nights at the peril of his own neck and to the terror of all humble pedestrians. His sons were educated at college, and went to the bar or got commissions in the army; his daughters changed their linsey-wolsey gowns for others of silk; carried their heads high and blushed for their relations who were numbered among the wrights, masons, and shoemakers of the land. When a change like this took place among the farmers of the vale, the dews of wealth would have fallen at the same time on the tenant of Ellisland: but Burns was too poor and too impatient to wait long for better times; he resolved to try another year or two, and then abandon farming for ever if it refused to bring the wealth to him which it did to others.

Having made this covenant with himself, he resumed his intercourse with the muse, and produced one of the best as well as longest of all his poems—"Tam O' Shanter." For this noble tale we are indebted to something like accident. Grose, the antiquarian, was on a visit to Riddel, of Friars-Carse, who, like himself, had a collection

> "Of auld nick-nackets,
> Rusty airn caps and jinglin' jackets
> Wad haud the Lothians three in tackets
> A towmont gude."

The Poet was invited to add wings to the evening hours, and something like friendship was established between him and the social Englishman, which both imagined would be lasting. In conversing about the antiquities of Scotland, Burns begged that Grose would introduce Allo-

way kirk into his projected work; and to fix the subject on his mind, related some of the wild stories of devilry and witchcraft with which Scotland abounds. The antiquarian listened to them all, and then said, "Write a poem on it, and I'll put in the verses with an engraving of the ruin." Burns set his muse to work; he could hardly sleep for the spell that was upon him, and with his "barmy noddle working prime," walked out to his favorite path along the river-bank.

"Tam O'Shanter" was the work of a single day; the name was taken from the farm of Shanter in Kyle, the story from tradition. Mrs. Burns relates that, observing Robert walking with long swinging sort of strides and apparently muttering as he went, she let him alone for some time; at length she took the children with her and went forth to meet him; he seemed not to observe her, but continued his walk; "on this," said she, "I stept aside with the bairns among the broom—and past us he came, his brow flushed and his eyes shining; he was reciting these lines:—

'Now Tam! O Tam! had thae been queans,
A' plump and strapping in their teens,
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair,
I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies!
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies!'

I wish ye had but seen him! he was in such ecstacy that the tears were happing down his cheeks. The Poet had taken writing materials with him, and leaning on a turf fence which commanded a view of the river, he committed the poem to paper, walked home, and read it in great triumph at the fire-side. It came complete and perfect from his fancy at the first heat;—no other work in the language contains such wondrous variety of genius in the same number of lines. His own account of his rapture in composition confirms the description of Mrs. Burns:—"I seized," said he to a correspondent, "my gilt-headed Wangee rod in my left hand—an instrument indispensably necessary—in the moment of inspiration

and rapture, and stride, stride, quicker and quicker,—out skipt I among the broomy banks of the Nith to muse."

Burns found his tale in several prose traditions. One stormy night, amid squalls of wind and blasts of hail—in short, on such a night as the devil would choose to take the air in, a farmer was plashing homewards from the forge with plough-irons on his shoulder. As he approached Alloway kirk, he was startled by a light glimmering in the haunted edifice; he walked up to the door, and saw a cauldron suspended over a fire, in which the heads and limbs of unchristened children were beginning to simmer. As there was neither fiend nor witch to protect it, he unhooked the cauldron, poured out the contents, and carried his trophy home, where it long remained an evidence of the truth of his story. We may observe in the poem the use made by Burns of this Kyle legend. Another story supplied him with two of his chief characters. A farmer having been detained by business in Ayr, found himself crossing the old bridge of Doon about the middle of the night. When he reached the gate of Alloway kirk-yard, a light came streaming from a Gothic window in the gabel, and he saw with surprise a batch of witches dancing merrily round their master the devil, who was keeping them in motion by the sound of his bagpipe. The farmer stopt his horse and gazed at their gambols; he saw several old dames of his acquaintance among them; they were footing it in their smocks. Unfortunately for him, one of them wore a smock too short by a span or so, which so tickled the farmer that he burst out with "Weel luppan, Maggie wi' the short sark!" He recollected himself, turned his horse's head, and spurred and switched with all his might towards the brig of Doon, well knowing that—

"A running stream they dare na cross."

When he reached the middle of the arch, one of the hags sprang to seize him, but nothing was on her side of the stream saving the horse's tail, which gave way to her grasp as if touched by lightning.

In a Galloway version of the tradition, it is recorded that the witch seizing the horse by the tail, stopt it in

full career in the centre of the bridge; upon which the farmer struck a back-handed blow with his sword that set him free, and enabled him to pass the stream without further molestation. On reaching his own house he found, to his horror, a woman's hand hanging in his horse's tail; and next morning was informed that the handsome wife of one of his neighbours was dangerously ill, and not expected to live. He went to see her—she turned away her face from him, and obstinately refused to say what ailed her; upon which he forcibly bared her wounded arm, and, displaying the bloody hand, accused her of witchcraft, and dealings with the devil; thereupon she made a confession, and was condemned and burnt.—The Galloway legend was too tragic for the aim of the Poet; it would have jarred with the wild humor of the scene in the kirk, and prevented him from displaying his wondrous powers of uniting the laughable with the serious, and the witty with the awful. Cromek, a curious inquirer, was informed on the spot that the places where the packman was smothered in the snow—where drunken Charlie broke his neck—where the murdered child was found by hunters—and where the mother of poor Mungo hanged herself, were no imaginary matters. The poetry of Burns is full of truth.

"Tam O' Shanter" was received with all the applause to which it is richly entitled. "I have seldom in my life," says Lord Woodhouselee, "tasted of higher enjoyment from any work of genius than I have received from this composition; and I am much mistaken if this poem alone, had you never written another syllable, would not have been sufficient to have transmitted your name down to posterity with high reputation." Of this "happiest of all mixtures of spirituality and practical life," as Sir Egerton Brydges calls the tale, the Poet was justly proud. He carried it in his pocket, and read it willingly to those in whose taste he had any trust. He read it to my father. His voice was deep, manly, and melodious, and his eye sparkled as he saw the effect of his poem on all around—young and old. A writer, who happened to be present on business, stung, perhaps, with that sarcastic touch on the brethren—

"Three lawyers' tongues turn'd inside out
With lies seam'd like a beggar's clout."

remarked, that he thought the language describing the witches' orgies obscure. "Obscure, sir!" said Burns, "ye know not the language of that great master of your own art—the devil. If you get a witch for a client, you will not be able to manage her defence!"

"The Whistle" is another poem of this happy season. The meeting, it seems, for deciding the ownership of the musical relique should have taken place sooner.—"Big with the idea," says Burns to Riddell, "of this important day (October 16, 1789) at Friars-Carse, I have watched the elements and skies, in the full persuasion that they would announce it to the astonished world by some phenomena of terrific portent. The elements, however, seem to take the matter very quietly; they did not even usher in this morning with triple suns and a shower of blood, symbolical of the three potent heroes and the mighty claret-shed of the day. For me, as Thomson in his Winter, says of the storm, I shall

'Hear astonish'd, and astonish'd sing.'"

The story of the "Whistle" is curious:—A Dane came to Scotland with the Princess of Denmark, in the reign of our sixth James, and challenged all the topers of the north to a contest at the bottle. A Whistle of ebony was to be the prize of the day; this he had blown in triumph at the courts of Copenhagen, Stockholm, Moscow, and Warsaw, and was only prevented from doing the same at the Scottish Court by Sir Robert Laurie of Maxwellton, who, after a contest of three days and three nights, left the Dane under the table,

"And blew on the whistle his requiem shrill."

On Friday, 16th October, 1790, the Whistle was again contended for in the same element by the descendants of the great Sir Robert:—

"Three joyous good fellows, with hearts clear of flaw:
Craigdarroch, so famous for wit, worth, and law;
And trusty Glenriddel, so skilled in old coins,
And gallant Sir Robert, deep read in old wines."

And that their deeds might not be inglorious, they chose an inspired chronicler to attend them:—

"A bard was selected to witness the fray,
And tell future ages the feats of the day;
A bard who detested all sadness and spleen,
And wish'd that Parnassus a vineyard had been."

This is one of the most dramatic of lyrics: all is in character, and in the strictest propriety of sentiment and language. The contest took place at Friars-Carse, a place of great natural beauty; but the combatants closed the shutters against the loveliness of the landscape, either up the Nith or down, and lighting the dining-room, ordered the corks of the claret to be drawn. They had already swallowed six bottles a-piece, and day was breaking, when Ferguson decanting a quart of wine, dismissed it at a draught. Upon this Glenriddel, recollecting that he was an elder, and a ruling one in the kirk, and feeling he was waging an ungodly strife, meekly withdrew from the contest, and

"Left the foul business to folks less divine."

Though Sir Robert could not well contend both with fate and quart bumpers, he fought to the last, and fell not till the sun arose. Not so Ferguson, and not so Burns; the former sounded a note of triumph on his Whistle, while

"Up rose our bard, like a prophet in drink:—
'Craigdarroch, thou'lt soar when creation shall sink!
But if thou would flourish immortal in rhyme,
Come—one bottle more—and have at the sublime!'"

In truth, it is said that the Poet drank bottle for bottle in this arduous contest, and, when day-light came, seemed much disposed to take up the conqueror.

Though Burns had ten large parishes to look after as exciseman, and though the inclination of husbandmen for smuggling in those days kept him busy, his fields seemed as well cultivated, and his crops little less luxuriant than those of his neighbours. But he felt that his plough was held without profit, and his dairy managed without gain, and remained for weeks at a time at home, intent on other matters than

"Learning his tuneful trade from every bough."

How he demeaned himself as gauger, farmer, and poet has been related by an able and observant judge:—"I

had an adventure with him," said Ramsay of Ochtertyre, "when passing through Dumfriesshire in 1790, with Dr. Stewart of Luss. Seeing him pass quickly near Closeburn, I said to my companion, 'that is Burns.' On coming to the inn (Brownhill), the ostler told us he would be back in a few hours to grant permits; that were he met with any thing seizable, he was no better than any other gauger: in every thing else he was a perfect gentleman. After leaving a note to be delivered to him on his return, I proceeded to his house, being curious to see his Jean, &c. I was much pleased with his *uxor Sabina qualis*, and the Poet's modest mansion, so unlike the habitation of ordinatry peasants. In the evening, he suddenly bounced in upon us, and said as he entered, 'I come, to use the words of Shakspeare, stewed in haste.' In fact, he had ridden incredibly fast. We fell into conversation directly, and soon got into the *mare magnum* of poetry. He told me he had now gotten a story for a drama, which he was to to call 'Rob Macquechan's Elshin,' from a popular story of Robert Bruce being defeated on the water of Cairn, when the heel of his boot being loosened in the flight, he applied to Rob to fix it, who, to make sure ran his awl nine inches up the king's heel. We were now going on at a great rate, when Mr. S——— popped in his head, which put a stop to our discourse, which had become very interesting. Yet in a little while it was resumed; and such was the force and versatility of the bard's genius, that he made the tears run down Mr. S.'s cheeks, albeit unused to the poetic strain." The Poet had imagined a drama commencing with the early vicissitudes of the fortunes of Bruce—recording his strange, his heroic, and sometimes laughable adventures, till all ended in the glorious consummation at Bannookburn. He allowed, as was his wont, the subject to float about in his mind, and drew out no plan or list of characters on paper.

We find Burns at this period informing Graham of Fintray that the excise business went on much smoother with him than he had expected, owing to the generous friendship of Mitchell the collector, and Findlater the supervisor.—"I dare to be honest," said he, "and I fear no labor. Nor do I find my hurried life greatly inimical to

my correspondence with the muses; I meet them now and then as I jog among the hills of Nithsdale, just as I used to do on the banks of Ayr." Of the lyrical fruit of this intercourse, I must render some account.

In the composition of a song, Burns went to work like a painter: what a fine living model is to an artist forming a Venus or a Diana, a lovely woman was to the Poet. He was fascinated through the eye; he thought of the looks of the last fair one he had met, and mused on her charms till the proper inspiration came; and then he laid out colors worthy of a goddess, on

"Fair or foul, it maks na whether."

Jean Lorimer, "The lass of Craigie-burn-wood," had levity at least equal to her beauty. When the first song in her praise was written she lived at Kemmis-hall in Nithsdale; she was extremely handsome, with uncommon sweetness in her smile, and joyousness in the glance of her eye. The Poet measured his verse over her charms to gratify a gentleman of the name of Gillespie, who was contending in vain with a military adventurer of the name of Whelpdale for the honor of her love. In "My tocher's the jewel," he expresses the scorn which a young lady feels at the selfish sentiments of her lover:—

"It's a' for the apple he'll nourish the tree;
It's a' for the hinney he'll cherish the bee:
My laddie's sae mickle in love with the siller,
He canna have love to spare for me."

From love he went to wine; nothing came wrong to him. In this his poetic powers resembled his conversational ability. "Gudewife, count the lawin" is the very essence of sociality and glee:—

"Gane is the day, and mirk's the night,
But we'll ne'er stray for faut o' light;
For ale and brandy's stars and moon,
And blude-red wine's the rising sun."

A little jacobitism was in his heart when he wrote "There'll never be peace till Jamie comes hame;" a little humor when he penned "What can a young lassie do wi' an auld man?" and in "Yon wild mossie mountains" his mind wandered back to a part of his early history, which he says "is of no consequence to the world to know."

In a happier mood of mind Burns composed "Wha is that at my bower-door?"—"It was suggested," said Gilbert, "to my brother, by the Auld man's address to the widow, printed in Ramsay's Tea-table Miscellany." A vein of pawkie simplicity runs through it:—

"Wha is that at my bower door?
O wha is it but Findlay!
Then gae yere gate, ye'se no be here—
Indeed maun I, quo' Findlay.

What mak' ye sae like a thief?
O come and see, quo' Findlay.
Before the morn ye'll work mischief—
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay.

Here this night, if ye remain—
I'll remain, quo' Findlay.
I dread ye'll ken the gate again—
Indeed will I, quo' Findlay."

"'The bonnie wee thing' was composed," says the Poet, "on my little idol, the charming lovely Davies." In a letter to the lady herself, he lets us a little into the mystery of his ballad-making:—"I have heard of a gentleman of some genius who was dexterous with his pencil; wherever this person met with a character in a more than ordinary degree congenial to his heart, he used to steal a sketch of the face, merely he said, as a notabene to point out the agreeable recollection to his memory. What this gentleman's pencil was to him, is my muse to me; and the verses which I do myself the honor to send you are a memento exactly of the same kind that he indulged in. When I meet with a person after my own heart, I positivly feel what an orthodox Protestant would call a species of idolatry, which acts on my fancy like inspiration; and I can no more resist rhyming on impulse, than an Æolian harp can refuse its tones to the streaming air." No poet has offered prettier reasons for writing love-songs.

These complimental moods gave way to a feeling more serious, when the Poet wrote "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever." The song I have heard alludes to Clarinda, and is supposed to embody the sentiments of the Bard when he bade farewell to that Edinburgh beauty. It says all in a few words that can be said on the subject:—

"Who shall say that fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him?
Me—no cheerful twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.
Had we never loved so kindly,
Had we never loved so blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken hearted."

Of the heroine of the "Banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," I can give no account; the song was altered from its original simple measure to suit music, accidentally composed by a writer in Edinburgh, whom a musician told to keep to the black keys of the harpsichord and preserve something like rhythm, and he would produce a Scots air. He did so, and this fine air, with a few touches from Clarke, was the result. The despair of "Ae fond kiss and then we sever," gave way to the gentler sorrows of the "Banks and braes o' bonnie Doon;" and, in its turn, "Love will venture in" asserted the dignity of successful love. This is a very beautiful lyric; the Poet thinks on his mistress, and looking at all manner of fine flowers, sees her, emblematically, in each: the lily, for purity; the daisy, for simplicity; and the violet, for modesty, are woven into this fragrant and characteristic chaplet.

Having obeyed the impulses of sorrow and serious love, mirth touched the strings of his harp, his heart brightened up, and he poured out, "O! for ane-and-twenty, Tam." The name of the heroine is lost; but her story is true to nature, and cannot be soon forgotten: there is a dance of words in the song suitable to the liveliness of the sentiment. "Sic a wife as Willie had," resembles the ironical and sarcastic chaunts of the old rustic ballad-makers: the picture of "Willie's Spouse," is not painted in kindly colors:

"She has an ee—she has but ane,
The cat has twa the very color,
Five rusty teeth forbye a stump,
A clapper tongue wad deave a miller;
A whisking beard about her mou',
Her nose and chin they threaten ither;
Sic a wife as Willie had
I wad nae gie a bodle for her."

This unsonsie dame dwelt in Dunscore, at no great distance from Ellisland; her descendants have none of her unlovesome qualities.

If Burns looked to living loveliness for the sake of making new songs, he looked also with affectionate eyes on the old mutilated lyrics of Scotland, and repaired them with unequalled skill. To the ballad of "Hughie Graham," he added some characteristic touches, as also to "Cock up your Beaver." Into the latter he has infused a jacobite feeling :—

> "Cock up your beaver, and cock it fu' sprush,
> We'll over the Border and gie them a brush;
> There's somebody there we'll teach better behaviour;
> Hey! my brave Johnnie lad, cock up your beaver."

He softened a little the rudeness of "Eppie Macnap," added bitterness to "The weary pound o' tow;" some of his fine feeling found its way into "The Collier laddie," and much acid irony was infused into "The carle of Kellyburn-braes."—Cromek informed me, that when he consulted Mrs. Burns respecting the changes which the genius of her husband had effected in the old songs, she ran her finger along the pages of the Museum, saying, "Robert gave that one a brushing—this one got a brushing, too :—aye, I mind this one weel, it got a gay good brushing!"—But when she came to "The carle of Kellyburn-braes," she said, "He gave this one a terrible brushing." Of these dread additions one specimen will suffice :—

> "The devil he swore by the edge of his knife,
> He pitied the man that was tied to a wife;
> The devil he swore by the kirk and the bell,
> He was not in wedlock, thank heav'n, but in hell."

The winter-time, which brings much leisure to the farmer, brought little or none to Burns. When he saw his corn secured against rain and snow; his

> "Potatoe brings weel snuggit up frae skaith;"

his plough frozen in the half-drawn furrow, and heard the "curler's roaring play" intimating that winter reigned over the vale, he had to mount his horse and do duty as a gauger, leaving Ellisland to the skill of his wife and the activity of his servants. As early as the harvest of 1790,

it was visible to those acquainted with such matters, that, as a farmer, the Poet was not thriving; the crop promised, in the eyes of the calculating, to make but a small return, compared with the demand of the rent; and, when he ploughed his ground in the following winter and spring, it was whispered that he would do so no more. He regretted this the less as he now looked upon the excise as sure bread and an improving appointment. Some time during the year 1791, his salary was raised to seventy pounds, and he was promised a more compact and less laborious district. This eased his mind amid the loss which he knew he should sustain, in turning the utensils and stock of Ellisland into money. He did not communicate his intentions to any one, though he hesitated not to say that he was losing by his bargain.

This year he was doomed to lose old friends without acquiring new ones. The death of the Earl of Glencairn he regarded as a sore misfortune. That nobleman was not rich, nor was his influence great; but had a sympathy with poetic feelings not common to men of rank. When he died, the hopes of the Poet seem to have died also: his "Lament," on the occasion, was a sincere one; the words require only to be uttered by a young Bard instead of an old one, to apply, in all respects, to himself. The verse is lyrical, and the sentiments those of nature:—

"The bridegroom may forget the bride
Was made the wedded wife yestreen;
The monarch may forget the crown
That on his head an hour has been;
The mother may forget the child
That smiles sae sweetly on her knee;
But I'll remember thee, Glencairn,
And all that thou hast done for me."

This is the language of a man who thought himself obliged. He wrote nothing half so tender or so touching on the death of the beautiful Miss Burnet, which happened about this time; he tried, but the words came with reluctance:—

"Life ne'er exulted in so rich a prize
As Burnet, lovely from her native skies;
Nor envious Death so triumphed in a blow
As that which laid the accomplish'd Burnet low."

Some will like better the compliment which he paid

her in prose. On returning from a first visit to Lord Monboddo, his friend Mr. Geddes said, "Well, and did you admire the young lady?"—"I admired God Almighty more than ever," said the Poet; "Miss Burnet is the most heavenly of all his works!" He did not hesitate to use expressions bordering on profanity when speaking of female charms.

In addition to the sorrow which he felt for the loss of valuable friends, his horse fell with him and broke his arm; and his farm having swept away all his ready money, visions of poverty began to hover in his sight. "Poverty," he exclaimed," thou half-sister of Death—thou cousin-german of hell! oppressed by thee the son of genius, whose ambition plants him at the tables of the fashionable and polite, must see, in suffering silence, his remarks neglected and his person despised; while shallow greatness, in his idiot attempts at wit, shall meet with countenance and applause." In such sarcastic sentiments as these, Burns began more and more to indulge:—"How wretched is the man," he says, "that hangs upon the favors of the great!—to shrink from every dignity of man at the approach of a lordly piece of self-consequence, who, amid all his tinsel and glitter, and stately hauteur, is but a creature formed as thou art—and, perhaps, not so well formed."

He could scarcely resist, however, the request of one of the vainest of those "lordly pieces of self-consequence," the Earl of Buchan—to come to the coronation of the bust of Thomson on Ednam-hill, at Dryburgh, on the 22nd of September, 1791.—"Suppose Mr. Burns," thus runs the mandate, "should, leaving the Nith, go across the country, and meet the Tweed at the nearest point from his farm, and wandering along the pastoral banks of Thomson's pure parent-stream, catch inspiration in the devious walk, till he finds Lord Buchan sitting on the ruins of Dryburgh; there the Commendator will give him a hearty welcome, and try to light his lamp at the pure flame of native genius, upon the altar of Caledonian virtue." The Poet had the sickle in his hand when the invitation came; he laid it down, took a walk along the bank of the Nith, composed the verses "To the Shade

of Thomson," and sent them to apologize for his absence.

If his poetic feelings were awakened by the invitation of Lord Buchan, his jacobitical partialities were gratified by the present of a valuable snuff-box from Lady Winifred Maxwell Constable, the last, in direct descent of the noble family of Nithsdale. This was an acknowledgment for his "Lament of Mary Queen of Scots." There was a picture of that ill-starred princess on the lid.—"In the moment of poetic composition," said Burns, "the box shall be my inspiring genius."—The ballad is a pathetic one. He imagines the queen in an English prison; she hears the birds sing—feels the odor of flowers, and her heart swells with the season:—

"Now blooms the lily by the bank,
The primrose down the brae;
The hawthorn's budding in the glen,
And milk-white is the slae:
The meanest hind in fair Scotland
May rove their sweets amang;
But I, the queen of a' Scotland,
Maun lie in prison strang."

He had been reading Percy's ballads, and his verses caught the olden hue and tone of those affecting compositions.

The great Glasgow road ran through the Poet's ground, and the coach often set down west-country passengers, who, trusting to the airt they came from, and the accessibility of the bard, made their sometimes unwelcome appearance at the door of Ellisland. Such visitations—from which no man of genius is free—consumed his time and wasted his substance—for hungry friends could not be entertained on air. A neighbour told me that he once found a couple of Ayrshire travellers, plaided, capped, and over-alled, seated at the door of Burns—their sense of etiquette not allowing them to enter the house in such trim. They were drinking punch, toasting Ayr—auld town and new, vowing that Mauchline was the loveliest of all spots, and Kyle the heart of Scotland. They found their way into Dumfries some time during the night.

In the summer of 1791, two English gentlemen who had met Burns in Edinburgh, paid him a visit at Ellisland. On calling at the house, they were told he had

walked out on the banks of the Nith. They proceeded in search of him, and found him—

"In sooth it was in strange array."

On a rock that projected into the stream they saw a man angling; he had a cap of fox-skin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which hung an enormous Highland broad-sword;—it was Burns. He received them with great cordiality, and asked them to share his humble dinner. On the table they found boiled beef, with vegetables, and barley-broth, of which they partook heartily. After dinner, the bard told them he had no wine to offer, nothing better than Highland whiskey, of which Mrs. Burns set a bottle on the table, and placed his punch-bowl of Scottish marble before him.—He mixed the spirit with water and sugar, filled their glasses, and invited them to drink. They were in haste —whiskey, to their southron stomachs, was scarcely tolerable; but the ardent hospitality of the Poet prevailed—the punch began to disappear, and his conversation was unto them as a charm. He ranged over a great variety of topics, illuminating whatever he touched. He related he tales of his infancy and of his youth; he recited some of the gayest and some of the tenderest of his poems; in the wildest of his strains of mirth he threw in some touches of melancholy, and spread around him the electric emotions of his powerful mind. The Highland whiskey improved in its flavor; the marble bowl was again and again emptied and replenished; the Poet's guests forgot the flight of time; and the prudence-becoming visitors, at the hour of midnight, lost their way returning to Dumfries, and could scarcely count its three steeples assisted by the morning dawn.

Burns still maintained his intercourse with the literati of Scotland. He visited Edinburgh, and arranged his affairs with the difficult Creech; called on some of his former intimates, and left his card at the doors of several lords; but his reception seems, save from one or two, to have been uncordial. What the learned thought of the grasp of the Poet's mind, may be gathered from the surprise which one of them expresses at his comprehending the

meaning of Alison's work on the principles of taste :— "I own, sir," said the Poet to the Philosopher, "that at first glance, several of your propositions startled me as paradoxical. That the martial clangor of a trumpet had something in it vastly more grand, heroic, and sublime than the twingle-twangle of a jew's-harp; that the delicate flexure of a rose-twig, when the half-blown flower is heavy with the tears of the dawn, was infinitely more beautiful and elegant than the upright stub of a burdock, and that from something innate and independent of all association of ideas. These I had set down as irrefragable orthodox truths, until perusing your book shook my faith."—"This," says Dugald Stewart, "I remember to have read with some degree of surprise at the distinct conception he appeared from it to have formed of the general principles of the law of association." It would seem, however, that the Poet, if convinced, was convinced against his will: he was slow in believing that at any time a burdock was esteemed equal in loveliness to a rose, or the chirp of a hedge-sparrow reckoned as noble as the cry of an eagle.

"As to my private concerns," he says to Dr. Moore, "I am going on a mighty tax-gatherer before the Lord, and have lately had the interest to get myself ranked on the lists of the excise as a supervisor. I had an immense loss in the death of the Earl of Glencairn, the patron from whom all my fame and good fortune took its rise; independent of my grateful attachment to him, which was indeed so strong that it pervaded my very soul, and was entwined with the thread of my existence. So soon as the prince's friends had got in, my getting forward in the excise would have been an easier business than otherwise it will be." In these modest hopes the Poet indulged. He had already numbered himself with "the Prince's friends;" but the prince was far from power; and had Burns lived till "the dog had," as he said, "got his day," he might have found reason to say with Scripture, "put not your trust in princes."

If his poems of this year are not numerous, the "Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson" is one of the sweetest and most beautiful of his latter compositions. He calls

on nature, animate and inanimate, to lament the loss of one who held his honors immediately from God:—

"Mourn, ye wee songsters of the wood;
Ye grouse that cap the heather-bud;
Ye curlews calling thro' a clud;
Ye whistling plover:
And mourn, ye whirring paitrick brood—
He's gane for ever!"

He copied out the poem, and sending it to his friend, M'Murdo, said, "You knew Henderson; I have not flattered his memory."

Burns wrote several new songs, and amended some old ones, during this season, for his friend Johnson's work. "Afton water" was an offering of other days to the accomplished lady of Afton-Lodge. "Bonnie Bell" is in honor of the charms of a Nithsdale dame, and "The deuk's dang o'er my daddie" had its origin in an old chaunt, some of the words of which the song still retains. "She's fair and fause" records the unfortunate termination of a friend's courtship; there is all or more than the bitterness of disappointed love in the concluding verse:—

"Whoe'er ye be that woman love,
To this be never blind,
Nae ferlie 'tis, tho' fickle she prove,
A woman has't by kind.
O woman! lovely woman fair,
An angel form's faun to thy share,
'Twad been o'er mickle to gi'en thee mair—
I mean an angel mind."

"The Deil's awa' wi' the Exciseman," is at once witty and ludicrous. It harmonized with the feelings of the north, where a gauger was long looked on as a national grievance, or rather insult. "The song of Death" is the last lyric which the rural walks of Ellisland inspired. On the 17th of December, 1791, he copied it for Mrs. Dunlop, and said,—"I have just finished the following song, which, to a lady, the descendant of Wallace, and herself the mother of several soldiers, needs neither preface nor apology." He imagines a field of battle, and puts his truly heroic song into the mouths of men wounded and dying; the sentiments uttered were those of his heart:—

"In the field of proud honor, our swords in our hands,
Our king and our country to save,
While victory shines on life's last ebbing sands—
O, who would not die with the brave!"

"This hymn," says Currie, "is worthy of the Grecian muse, when Greece was most conspicuous for genius and valor." Burns thought of printing it separately with the air, which is a fine old Highland one; some one whom he consulted, advised him against this, and so prevented him from making his country acquainted with his unaltered feelings, at a time when his character was beginning to be maligned by the secret whisperer and the pensioned spy.

Burns briefly, in his letters to his brother and others, intimates the loss he endured by continuing in Ellisland; but he has no where assigned reasons or entered into explanations. This has been misinterpreted to his injury. He alludes to his own trials, when, in 1792, he says to Mrs. Dunlop:—"I wish the farmer joy of his new acquisition to his family: I cannot say that I give him joy of his life as a farmer. 'Tis a farmer paying a dear, unconscionable rent, 'a cursed life.' As to a laird farming his own property, sowing his own corn in hope, and reaping it in spite of brittle weather, in gladness, knowing that none can say unto him, 'What dost thou?' fattening his herds, shearing his flocks, rejoicing at Christmas, and begetting sons and daughters, until he be the venerated grey haired leader of a little tribe—'tis 'a heavenly life!' but devil take the life of reaping the fruits that another must eat!"

When it was made known in December, 1791, that Burns was about to relinquish the lease of Ellisland, his merits as a farmer were eagerly canvassed by the husbandmen around. One imputed his failure to the duties of the excise; to his being condemned to gallop two hundred miles per week, to inspect yeasty barrels, when his farm required his presence; another said that Mrs. Burns was intimate with a town life, but ignorant of the labors of barn and byre; a third observed that Ellisland was out of heart, and, in short, was the dearest farm on Nithsdale; while James Currie, a sagacious farmer, whose

land lay contiguous, remarked, when I inquired the cause of the Poet's failure:—"Fail! how could he miss but fail, when his servants ate the bread as fast as it was baked, and drank the ale as fast as it was brewed. Consider a little: at that time close economy was necessary to enable a farmer to clear twenty pounds a year by Ellisland. Now, Burns' handy-work was out of the question: he neither ploughed, nor sowed, nor reaped like a hard working farmer; and then he had a bevy of idle servants from Ayrshire. The lasses were ay baking bread, and the lads ay lying about the fireside eating it warm with ale. Waste of time and consumption of food would soon reach to twenty pounds a year."

Had Mr. Millar of Dalswinton been on the same friendly terms with the Poet as when, in a fit of generous feeling, he offered him the choice of his farms at a rent of his own fixing, Burns might have lived long, and, perhaps, prosperously in Ellisland. But they were too haughty in their natures to continue friends; Millar required respect and submission, which the Poet was not disposed to pay; and I have heard it averred by one who was in a situation to know, that the former was not loth to get rid of a tenant by whose industry he had no chance of being enriched, from whom he could not well exact rent, and whose wit paid little respect to persons. The Poet dispersed his stock and implements by auction, among many eager purchasers; restored the land and onstead to the proprietor; and, paying him one pound fourteen shillings for dilapidations in thatch, glass, and slating, moved off with his household to Dumfries, leaving nothing at Ellisland but a putting-stone, with which he loved to exercise his strength—a memory of his musings which can never die, and three hundred pounds of his money sunk beyond redemption, in a speculation from which all augured happiness.

PART IV:—DUMFRIES.

Burns removed his wife and children, with his humble furniture, to a house near the lower end of the Bank-Ven-

nel in Dumfries. The neighbourhood was to his mind; and as this was near the stamp-office, it is probable that John Syme, the "Stamp-office Johnnie," of the Poet's election ballad, influenced his choice. He had other neighbours whom he could not but esteem: Captain Hamilton lived on the opposite side of the way; Provost Staig, with whose family Burns was already intimate, was but a few doors off, while Dr. Maxwell, a skilful physician' an accomplished gentleman, and a confirmed republican, dwelt in the next street. The Sands, where cattle are bought and sold, was beside him, the Nith was within a good stone's cast—the town, too, is compact and beautiful.

The Poet had no expensive acquaintance to entertain; and his wife, with a single servant, was frugal, and anxious to make the little they had go far. But he had no longer the rough abundance of a farm to resort to; his meal, his malt, his butter, and his milk, were all to buy, and his small salary required the guidance of a considerate head and hand. To calculate was easy, had it been possible to lay down an exact system of expenditure: as a man of genius, he was liable to the outlay of correspondence, distant and often unexpected; he was exposed to the inroads of friends and admirers, who consumed his time and his substance also; he longed for knowledge, which, to obtain, he had to buy; he desired to see by books what the republic of literature, of which he was a member, was about, and this required money; and he was, moreover, of a nature kindly and hospitable, and could not live in that state of frugal circumspection, which a gentleman who kept a house and a horse on seventy pounds per annum, required.

Even the wandering poor were to the Poet a heavy tax; he allowed no one to go past his door without a halfpenny or a handful of meal. He was kind to such helpless creatures as are weak in mind, and saunter harmlessly about: a poor half-mad creature—the Madge Wildfire, it is said, of Scott—always found a mouthful ready for her at the bard's fire-side; nor was he unkind to a crazy and tippling prodigal named Quin.—"Jamie," said the Poet one day as he gave him a penny, "you should pray to be turned from the evil of your ways; you are ready to run now to melt that into whiskey."—"Turn,"

said Jamie, who was a wit in his way, "I wish some one would turn me into the worm o' Will Hyslop's whiskey-still, that the drink might rin continually through me."—"Well said Jamie!" answered the Poet, "you shall have a glass of whiskey once a week for that, if you'll come sober for it." A friend rallied Burns for indulging such creatures:—"You don't understand the matter," said he, "they are poets; they have the madness of the muse, and all they want is the inspiration—a mere trifle!"

The labors of the excise led him along a barren line of sea-coast, extending from Caerlaverock-castle, where the Maxwells dwelt of old, to Annan water. This district fronts the coast of England; and from its vicinity to the Isle of Man, was in those days infested with daring smugglers, who poured in brandy, Holland-gin, tea, tobacco, and salt, in vast quantities. Small farmers, and persons engaged in inland traffic, diffused these commodities through the villages; these were generally vigorous and daring fellows, in whose hearts a gauger or two bred no dismay. They were well mounted, acquainted with the use of a cutlass, an oak-sapling, or a whip loaded with lead; and when mounted between a couple of brandy-kegs, and their horses' heads turned to the hills, not one exciseman in ten dared to stop them. To prevent the disembarkation of run-goods, when a smuggling craft made its appearance, was the duty of the Poet; and many a darksome hour he was compelled to keep watch, that the peasantry might not have the pleasure of drinking tea or brandy duty free. There was something which suited his fancy in all this. He had, galloping from point to point, much excitement of mind, and hopes of golden booty, but not without blows.

In whatever adventure he was engaged, "still his speech was song." Mounted on the successor of Jenny Geddes, whose mortal career closed at Ellisland, he "muttered his wayward fancies as he roved," and sang the beauty of the maidens of the land, and the pastoral charms of the country. It was in one of his expeditions against the smugglers that he wrote the brief but exquisite lyric, "Louis what reck I by thee?" To say much in a few words is one of the characteristics of his muse:—

"Louis, what reck I by thee,
Or Geordie on his ocean?
Dyvor, beggar loons to me,
I reign in Jeanie's bosom!"

"Out over the Forth" is another of his short and lucky compositions. "The carding o't" belongs to the same class; nothing in all the compass of lyric verse is more truly natural:—

"I coft a stane o' haslock woo'
To make a coat to Johnnie o't;
For Johnnie is my only jo,
I lo'e him best of ony yet.
For though his locks be lyart gray,
And though his brow be held aboon,
Yet I hae seen him on a day
The pride of a' the parishen."

One day, during the month of August, he was surprised by a visit from Miss Lesley Baillie, a beauty of the west of Scotland.—"On which," said Burns to Mrs. Dunlop, "I took my horse, though God knows I could ill spare the time, accompanied her father and her fourteen or fifteen miles, and dined and spent the day with them. 'Twas about nine, I think, when I left them, and riding home, I composed the following ballad." Some of the verses of this song are in his best manner:—

"To see her is to love her,
And love but her for ever;
For nature made her what she is,
And never made anither.
The deil he could na skaith thee,
Nor aught that wad belang thee;
He'd look into thy bonnie face,
And say, 'I canna wrang thee.'"

Most of the songs which I have hitherto noticed were written for the Museum of Johnson. A candidate of higher pretence now made his appearance; this was Thomson.—"I have," said he in a letter to Burns, "employed many leisure hours in selecting and collecting the best of our national melodies for publication. I have engaged Pleyel, the most agreeable composer living, to put accompaniments to these, and also to compose an instrumental prelude and conclusion to each air. To render this work perfect, I am desirous of having the

poetry improved, wherever it seems unworthy of the music; and that it is so, in many instances, is allowed by every one conversant with our musical collections. To remove this reproach would be an easy task to the author of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night,' and for the honor of Caledonia I would fain hope he may be induced to take up the pen."

An application such as this appealed to too many associations for Burns to resist; he replied with something like the enthusiasm of a lover when his mistress asks a favor, "As the request you make," said the Poet, September 16, 1792, "will positively add to my enjoyments in complying with it, I shall enter into your undertaking with all the small portion of abilities I have strained to their utmost execution by the impulse of enthusiasm. If you are for English verses, there is, on my part, an end of the matter. Whether in the simplicity of the ballad or the pathos of the song, I can only hope to please myself in being allowed, at least, a sprinkling of our native tongue. As to any remuneration, you may think my songs either above or below price, for they shall absolutely be the one or the other. In the honest enthusiasm with which I embark in your undertaking, to talk of money, would be downright prostitution of soul."

To stipulations such as these Thomson could have no objections to offer; he was glad to get the Bard on his own romantic terms The first fruits of the bargain was "The Lea Rig." Though a beautiful song, it seems not to have been to the satisfaction of the Poet. "I tried my hand on the air," he says, "and could make nothing more of it than the verses which I enclose. Heaven knows they are poor enough! All my earlier songs are the breathings of ardent passion; and though it might have been easy, in after times, to have given them a polish, yet that polish would have defaced the legend of my heart which is so faithfully inscribed on them."

"Highland Mary" followed this. The lyrical flow of the verse, and the truth and pathos of the sentiments, make it a favorite with all who have voices or feelings. "I think," says the Poet, "the song is in my happiest manner; it refers to one of the most interesting passages

in my youthful days; and I own I should be much flattered to see the verses set to an air, which would ensure celebrity. Perhaps, after all, 'tis the still glowing prejudice of my heart that throws a borrowed lustre over the merits of the composition."—He makes inanimate nature a sharer in his rapture:—

"How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk!
How rich the hawthorn's blossom!
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours, on angel wings,
Flew o'er me and my dearie;
For dear to me as light and life
Was my sweet Highland Mary."

This exquisite lyric proves how much the passionate affections of his youth still moved him. He was ready, when Mary's image rose on his fancy, to pour out his feelings in song; he was more than usually inspired whenever he thought of her. The thorn, under whose shade the lovers sat, is still pointed out and held sacred by the peasantry.

The season of winter was propitious to the muse of Burns: there was something of old habit in this: the long evenings bring leisure to the farmer, and the farmer was still strong in him. "Auld Rob Morris" was written in November; the idea is taken from an earlier song, but the Burns-spirit soon gained the ascendant; he has painted the portrait of his heroine in similes:—

"She's fresh as the morning the fairest in May;
She's sweet as the evening amang the new hay;
As blythe and as artless as lambs on the lea,
And dear to my heart as the light to my ee."

"Duncan Gray" came to the world in December: had he come in summer he could not have been more "a lad of grace;" he went a wooing in a pleasant time; on gude Yule night, when all were joyous—but

"Maggie coost her head fu' hiegh,
Looked asklent and unco skiegh,
Gart poor Duncan stand abiegh.

He was not however to be daunted with this; he knew woman better:—

"Duncan fleeched and Duncan prayed,
Meg was deaf as Ailsa craig;
Duncan sighed baith out and in;
Grat his een baith bleer'd and blin;
Spak o' lowpin owre a linn!"

She relented.—"Duncan Gray," said the Poet, "is a light horse-gallop of an air which precludes sentiment—the ludicrous is its ruling feature."

"O! poortith, cauld and restless love," is a song full of other feelings: the heroine is said to be Jean Lorimer, the lass of Craigie-Burn-wood: and this is countenanced by the sentiment of one impassioned verse:—

"Her een sae bonnie blue betray
How she repays my passion;
But prudence is her o'erword ay
She talks of rank and fashion.
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sic a lassie by him?
O wha can prudence think upon,
And sae in love as I am?"

A being of a more celestial nature inspired that magnificent lyric, "The Vision." The ruined college of Lincluden, which stands among antique trees on a beautiful plat of rising ground, where the Cluden unites with the Nith, a little above Dumfries, was a favorite haunt of the Poet, as it is of all lovers of landscape beauty. On a moonlight evening he imagined himself musing alone among the splendid ruins: the dust of a Scottish princess and the bones of one of the intrepid Douglasses brought recollections of ancient independence to his mind, while the quiet and beautiful scenery around awakened inspiration. For liquid ease of language and heroic grandeur of conception "The Vision" is unequalled; the commencing verse prepares us for the coming of something more than human:—

"As I stood by yon roofless tower,
Where the wa' flower scents the dewy air,
Where the howlet mourns in her ivy bower,
And tells the midnight moon her care—
The winds were laid, the air was still,
The stars they shot along the sky,
The fox was howling on the hill,
And distant echoing glens reply."

While enjoying the scene, and looking on the northern streamers, the Vision of Liberty descended or arose be-

fore him; not the blood-stained nymph of that name beloved by the Jacobin Club, but a Liberty of Scottish extraction, stern and stalwart, of the rougher sex, attired like an ancient minstrel carrying a harp, and wearing the cognizance of freedom. The majestic apparition touched his harp and chaunted a strain which spoke of former joys and present sorrows, in language which the Poet durst only describe. This fine lyric was intended, with some modifications, to be wrought into the drama of "The Bruce," a subject never wholly out of the Bard's fancy.

From musing on woman's love and man's freedom, Burns was rudely awakened. An inquiry regarding the sentiments which he entertained and the language in which he had indulged concerning "Thrones and Dominations" was directed to be made by the Commissioners of Excise, pursuant to instructions it is said received from high quarters. It will probably never be known who the pestilent informer against the Poet was; some contemptible wretch who had suffered from his wit or who envied his fame gave the information on which the Board of Excise acted, and he was subjected to a sort of inquisition. The times, indeed, in which he lived were perilous, and government found it no easy thing to rule or tranquillize the agitated passions of the people. A new light had arisen on the nations: freedom burst out like a summer sun in France; monarchy was trampled under foot; democracy arose in its place; equality in all, save intellect, was preached up, and the true order of nature was to be restored to the delighted world.

This doctrine was welcomed widely in Scotland; it resembled, in no small degree, the constitution of the Calvinistic kirk, which is expressly democratic; and it accorded with the sentiments which education and knowledge awaken—for who is so blind as not to see that idols, dull and gross, occupy some of the high places which belong to genius as a birthright? It corresponded wondrously too, with the notions of Burns: it harmonized with the plan which he perceived in nature, and was in strict keeping with his sentiments of free-will and independence.—"He was disposed," says Professor Wal-

ker, "from constitutional temper, from education, and from the accidents of life, to a jealousy of power, and a keen hostility against every system which enabled birth and opulence to intercept those rewards which he conceived to belong to genius and virtue." That he desired to see true genius honored, and wealthy presumption checked; that he wished to take his place on the table-land among peers and princes, and obtain station and importance—to adorn which his high powers, he believed, were given—were desires natural to a gifted mind; and it could not be but galling for him to see men who had not a tithe of his talent rolling in luxury, while he was doomed to poverty and dependence. That these sentiments were in the heart of Burns I know; that he ever sought to give them full utterance, or entertained them farther than as theories grateful to his mind, it would be difficult to find proof.

From these charges Burns strove to defend himself: he addressed his steady friend Grahame, of Fintray, on the subject; the letter is dated December, 1792.—"I have been surprised, confounded and distracted by Mr. Mitchell, the collector, telling me that he has received an order from your Board to inquire into my political conduct, and blaming me as a person disaffected to government. Sir, you are a husband and a father. You know what you would feel to see the much-loved wife of your bosom and your helpless prattling little ones turned adrift into the world, degraded and disgraced, from a situation in which they had been respectable and respected. I would not tell a deliberate falsehood, no, not though even worse horrors—if worse can be than those I have mentioned—hung over my head; and I say that the allegation, whatever villain has made it, is a lie! To the British Constitution, on revolution principles, next, after my God, I am most devoutly attached. Fortune, sir, has made you powerful and me impotent—has given you patronage and me dependence. I would not, for my single self, call on your humanity; I could brave misfortune—I could face ruin—for, at the worst, 'Death's thousand doors stand open;' but the tender concerns which I have mentioned—the claims and ties which I see at this moment, and

feel around me—how they unnerve courage and wither resolution! To your patronage, as a man of some genius, you have allowed me a claim; and your esteem, as an honest man, I know is my due. To these, sir, permit me to appeal; by these may I adjure you to save me from that misery which threatens to overwhelm me; and with my latest breath I will say it, I have not deserved?"

These are the words of his private letter: it enclosed another, intended for the eye of the Commissioners, and which was laid before the Board. In the second epistle, Burns disclaimed all idea of setting up a republic, and declared that he stood by the constitutional principles of the revolution of 1688: at the same time he felt that corruptions had crept in, which every patriotic Briton desired to see amended.—"This last remark," says the Poet, in his celebrated letter to John Francis Erskine, afterwards Earl of Mar, gave great offence; and, one of our supervisors-general, a Mr. Corbet, was instructed to inquire on the spot, and to document me—'That my business was to act, *not to think;* and that whatever might be, men or measures, it was for me to be *silent* and *obedient.*' Mr. Corbet was my steady friend; so, between Mr. Grahame and him, I have been partly forgiven, only I understand that all hopes of my getting officially forward are blasted."

These words were written by the Poet, April 13, 1793, and yet Mr. Findlater, then his superior officer, says, "I may venture to assert, that when Burns was accused of a leaning to democracy, and an inquiry into his conduct took place, he was subjected, in consequence thereof, to no more than perhaps a private or verbal caution, to be more circumspect in future. Neither do I believe his promotion was thereby affected as has been stated."—Burns, I apprehend, knew best how this was: an order to act, and not to think; and, whatever might be men and measures, to be silent and obedient, seems a sharp sort of private caution. That the records of the excise-office, as some one assured Lockhart, exhibit no traces of this too memorable matter, is not to be wondered at: expulsions alone are entered—or, if the records say more,

memoranda, so little to the honor of the Commissioners, will neither be eagerly sought for, nor willingly found. That Burns never got forward is certain; that he ceased to speak of his hopes of advancement, is also true. What was the cause of this? That it did not arise from his want of skill or his inattention to his duties Findlater furnishes undeniable testimony, and other evidence can readily be found: nor was it because death slipt too early in and frustrated the desire of the Board to advance him, for he survived their insulting and crushing inquiry more than three years and a half. He survived, indeed, but he was no longer the bright and enthusiastic being who looked forward with eager hope; who ascended in fancy the difficult steeps of fame; and who set coteries in a roar of laughter, or moved them to tears.

Reasons for this harshness on the part of Government —for the Board of Excise was but the acting servant— have been anxiously sought, in the words and deeds of Burns.—"He stood," says Walker, "on a lofty eminence, surrounded by enemies as well as by friends, and no indiscretion which he committed was suffered to escape." His looks were watched; his words weighed; and wheresoever he went the eyes of the malignant and the envious were on him. I have been told by one incapable of misleading me, that Burns sometimes made his appearance in a club of obscure individuals in Dumfries, where toasts were given, and songs sung which required closed doors. I have also been informed, that when invited to a private dinner, where the entertainer proposed "the health of William Pitt," the Poet said sharply, Let us drink the health of a greater and better man— George Washington;" and it is also true, that when Dumourier, the republican general, deserted the cause of his country, and joined her enemies, Burns rashly chaunted that short song, beginning

"You are welcome to despots Dumourier."

Nay more, I have the proof before me that he wrote a scoffing ballad on the foreign sovereigns who united to crush French liberty; but then all these matters happened after, not before he was "documented" by the Board of Excise. That he forgot now and

then what was due to the dignity of his genius, is no new admission. The club which sung songs with closed doors, did so to hinder the landlady, not the landlord, to hear; the dinner where he toasted Washington, and was sullen because it was not drunk, took place in 1793.—In Midsummer, the same year, Dumourier forsook the standard of his country, and was welcomed by despots; and with regard to the ballad on the sovereigns, I am sure the gravest of them all would have laughed heartily at the vivid but indecorous wit of the composition.

A more serious indiscretion has been imputed to him. Lockhart relates, that on the 27th of February, 1792, a smuggling brig entered the Solway and Burns was one of the party of officers appointed to watch her motions. It was soon discovered that her crew were numerous, well armed, and likely to resist; upon which Lewars, a brother exciseman, galloped off to Dumfries, and Crawford, the superintendent, went to Ecclefechan for military assistance. Burns manifested much impatience at being left on a cold exposed beach, with a force unequal to cope with those to whom he was opposed, and exclaimed against the dilatory movements of Lewars, wishing the devil to take him. Some one advised him to make a song about it; on which the Poet, taking a few strides among the shells and pebbles, chaunted "The deil's awa' wi' the exciseman." The song was not well composed, when up came Lewars with his soldiers, on which Burns putting himself at their head, his pistols in his pockets, and his sword in his hand, waded mid-waist deep into the sea, and carried the smuggler. She was armed. The Poet, whose conduct was much commended, purchased four of her brass guns, and sent them a present to the French Directory. These, with the letter which accompanied them, were intercepted on their way to France. The suspicions of government were awakened by this breach of decorum, and men in power turned their eyes on the bard, and opened their ears to all his unguarded sayings. That the smuggler was captured chiefly by the bravery of Burns I have been often told; but I never heard it added that he purchased her guns and sent them to the Directory. The Biographer

seems to have had his information from persons connected with the excise; but I suspect the story is not more accurate than that, when accused of a leaning to democracy, "he was subjected to no more than perhaps a verbal or private caution to be more circumspect in future."

Burns felt humbled and hurt: he was degraded in his own eyes; he was pushed rudely down from his own little independent elevation, and treated like an imbecile, whose words and actions were to be regulated by the ungentle members of the Board of Excise.—"Have I not," he says to Erskine, "a more precious stake in my country's welfare than the richest dukedom in it? I have a large family of children, and the prospect of many more. I have three sons who I see already have brought into the world souls ill qualified to inhabit the bodies of slaves."

It is pleasing to escape with the Poet from the racks of the Board of Excise, and accompany him on his excursions along the banks of the Nith, where he soothed his spirit by composing songs for the publications of Thomson or Johnson. In January, 1793, he wrote "Lord Gregory;" in March, "Wandering Willie" and "Jessie," and in April, "The poor and honest Sodger." The first is borrowed in some measure, from the exquisite old ballad of "The Lass of Lochroyan," the second is more original:—

> "Loud blew the cauld winter winds at our parting;
> It was na the blast brought the tear to my ee;
> Now welcome the simmer, and welcome my Willie;
> The simmer to nature—my Willie to me."

The third was written in honor of the young and the lovely Jessie Staig of Dumfries; and the fourth was awakened by the prospect of coming war, which ended not till it laid many kingdoms desolate, and put the half of Britain into mourning. In the remarks of Thomson on his songs he was not always acquiescent.—"Give me leave," he says, "to criticize your taste in the only thing in which it is reprehensible. You know I ought to know something of my own trade; of pathos, sentiment, and point you are a complete judge; but there is a quality more necessary than either in a song, and which is the

only essence of a ballad, I mean simplicity. Now, if I mistake not, this last feature you are apt to sacrifice to the foregoing." He was as anxious about the purity of Scottish music as about the simplicity of the verse.—"One hint," he says to Thomson, "let me give you: whatever Pleyel does, let him not alter one iota of the original Scottish airs; let our national music preserve its native features. They are, I own, frequently wild and irreducible to the more modern rules, but on that very eccentricity, perhaps, depends a great part of their effect."

The beauties whom Burns met on Nithside, inspired many of the sweetest of his songs: the daughters of his friend, John M'Murdo, were then very young; but they were also very lovely, and had all the elegance and simplicity which poets love. To Jean M'Murdo we owe the ballad of "Bonnie Jean." "I have some thought," he says to Thomson, "of inserting in your index, or in my notes, the names of the fair ones the themes of my songs. I do not mean the name at full, but dashes or asterisms, so as ingenuity may find them out. The heroine of the foregoing is Miss M——, daughter of Mr. M—— of D——, one of your subscribers: I have not painted her in the rank which she holds in life, but in the dress and character of a cottager." He thought very well of this composition; he asks if the image in the following sweet verse is not original;—

"As in the bosom of the stream
The moonbeam dwells at dewy e'en;
So trembling pure was faithful love
Within the breast of bonnie Jean."

Her sister Phillis, a young lady equally beautiful and engaging, inspired the Poet also; though he imputes the verses in which he sings of her charms, to the entreaty of Clarke the musician. The first of these lyrics begins:—

"While larks, with little wing,
Fann'd the pure air,
Tasting the breathing spring,
Forth did I fare."

The other contains that fine verse:—

"Her voice is the song of the morning,
That wakes through the green spreading grove,
When Phœbus peeps over the mountains
On music, and pleasure, and love."

Ideal loveliness sometimes appeared to him in his solitary wanderings. Autumn he reckoned a propitious season for verse; he wrote thus to Thomson in the month of August:—"I rode out yestreen for a gloamin' shot at the muses, when the muse that presides over the shores of Nith, or, rather, my old inspiring dearest nymph, Coila, whispered me the following: I have two reasons for thinking that it was my early sweet simple inspirer that was at my elbow, 'smooth gliding without sweep,' and pouring the song on my glowing fancy. In the first place, since I left Coila's native haunts, not a fragment of a poet has arisen to cheer her solitary musings by catching inspiration from her; so I more than suspect she has followed me hither, or, at least, makes me occasional visits." The song which this celestial lady of the west awakened, commences thus:

"Come let me take thee to my breast,
And pledge we ne'er shall sunder,
And I shall spurn as vilest dust
The world's wealth and grandeur."

From lower sources other lyrics of this period are said to have sprung. To the winning looks of a young girl who "brewed gude ale for gentlemen," and was indulgent even to rakish customers, we owe the song of "The golden locks of Anna," of which there are several versions, and none quite decorous, though a clerical biographer of the Bard has said otherwise. A purer song, "The mirk night of December" had its origin in a similar quarter:—

"O May! thy morn was ne'er so sweet,
As the mirk night of December,
For sparkling was the rosy wine,
And private was the chamber,
And dear was she I darena name
But I will ay remember."

Burns was as ready with his verse to solace the woes of others, as to give utterance to his own. "You, my dear sir," he says to Thomson, "will remember an unfortunate part of our worthy friend Cunningham's story, which happened about three years ago, that struck my fancy, and I endeavoured to do the idea justice as follows." —The song expressing the sentiments of his friend is that sublime one—

"Had I a cave on some wild distant shore."

The concluding verse, a lady told me, always made her shudder:—

"Falsest of womankind! canst thou declare
All thy fond plighted vows—fleeting as air?
To thy new lover hie,
Laugh o'er thy perjury;
Then in thy bosom try
What peace is there."

To the influence of thunder, lightning, and rain, we owe, we are told, the heroic Address of Bruce at Bannockburn. I abridge the legend of John Syme, who accompanied the Poet on a tour in Galloway:—"I got Burns a grey Highland sheltie to ride on. We dined the first day, July 27, 1793, at Glendinning's, of Parton—a beautiful situation on the banks of the Dee. In the evening we walked out and viewed the Alpine scenery around; immediately opposite, we saw Airds, where dwelt Lowe, the author of Mary's Dream. This was classic ground for Burns; he viewed 'the highest hill which rises o'er the source of Dee,' and would have staid till the 'passing spirit' appeared, had we not resolved to reach Kenmore that night. We arrived as 'The Gordons' were sitting down to supper. Here is a genuine baron's seat; the castle, an old building, stands on a large natural moat, and in front the Ken winds for several miles through a fertile and beautiful holm. We spent three days with 'The Gordons,' whose hospitality is of a polished and endearing kind. We left Kenmore and went to Gatehouse. I took him the moor road, where savage and desolate regions extended wide around. The sky was sympathetic with the wretchedness of the soil; it became lowering and dark—the winds sighed hollow—the lightnings gleamed—the thunders rolled. The Poet enjoyed the awful scene; he spoke not a word, but seemed wrapt in meditation. In a little while the rain began to fall; it poured in floods upon us. For three hours did the wild elements rumble their bellyfull upon our defenceless heads. We got utterly wet; and to revenge ourselves, the Poet insisted, at Gatehouse, on our getting utterly drunk. I said that in the midst of the storm, on the wilds of Kenmore,

Burns was wrapt in meditation. What do you think he was about? He was charging the English army along with Bruce at Bannockburn. He was engaged in the same manner in our ride home from St. Mary's Isle, and I did not disturb him. Next day he produced me the Address of Bruce to his troops, and gave me a copy for Dalzell."

Concerning this far-famed ode, Burns says to Thomson,—"There is a tradition which I have met with in many places in Scotland, that the air of 'Hey, tuttie tattie,' was Robert Bruce's march at the battle of Bannockburn. This thought, in my solitary wanderings, warmed me to a pitch of enthusiasm on the theme of liberty and independence, which I threw into a kind of Scottish ode, that one might suppose to be the royal Scot's address to his heroic followers on that eventful morning." In the same strain he addresses the Earl of Buchan, to whom he sent a copy of the song.—"Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotsman, I have rarely met with any thing in history which interests my feelings as a man equal to the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel usurper leading on the finest army in Europe to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly-daring and greatly-injured people; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country, or perish with her. Liberty! thou art a prize truly; never canst thou be too dearly bought!"—The simplicity and vigor of this most heroic of modern lyrics were injured by lengthening the fourth line of each verse to suit the air of Lewie Gordon.

The "Vision of Liberty," and "Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled!" were to form part of the long-meditated drama of "The Bruce." This the Poet intimated to his friends in conversation, and also in pencil memoranda on one of the blank leaves of Collins's poems. Several lines of verse are scattered among the prose—all showing on what topic he was musing:—

"Where Bannockburn's ensanguined flood,
Swell'd with mingling hostile blood,
Saw Edward's myriads struck with deep dismay,
And Scotia's troop of brothers win their way.
O glorious deed, to brave a tyrant's band!
O heavenly joy, to free our native land!"

His thoughts now and then inclined to dramatic composition, and hovered between the serious and the comic.—"I have turned my thoughts," he says to Lady Glencairn, "on the drama. I do not mean the stately buskin of the tragic music. Does not your Ladyship think that an Edinburgh audience would be more amused with the affectation, folly, and whim of true Scottish growth, than by manners which by far the greatest part of the audience can only know at second hand?" There is no question that dialogues, characters, and songs, such as Burns could conceive and write, would have been welcome to a northern, and perhaps a southern audience. His inimitable "Jolly Beggars" shows dramatic powers of a higher order.

Burns in his earlier days, lent his muse as an auxiliary to the western clergy; nor can it be forgotten that she fought their battle with a boldness which was only endured because the cause was thought to be a pious one. In Nithsdale she became a volunteer in a more worldly strife, and lent her breath to augment or allay the flame of a contested election. When Sir James Johnston of Westerhall, in the year 1790, offered himself as a candidate for the Dumfries district of burghs, he was opposed by Patrick Millar the younger of Dalswinton. The former was a good man, of an old family, and a determined Tory; the latter was a captain in the army, had the promise of youth upon him, and was a resolute Whig. Burns, through the impulse of his genius, was somewhat of a republican. Old jacobitical prejudices, and the kindness of Grahame of Fintray, inclined his feelings towards the Tories; while his connexion with Millar, his regard for M'Murdo, his respect for Staig, and his affection for Syme, all combined to draw him towards the Whigs. His election-ballads of this period show how prudently he balanced the various interests. The first of these compositions is not inappropriately called "The Five Carlines." The burghs of Dumfries, Lochmaben, Annan, Kircudbright, and Sanquhar are cleverly personified in the second verse:—

"There was Maggie by the banks o' Nith,
A dame wi' pride eneugh;
And Marjorie o' the mony Lochs,
A carline auld and teugh;

And blinkin' Bess o' Annandale,
That dwelt by Solway side;
And whiskey Jean, that took her gill
In Galloway sae wide;
And black Joan frae Crichton-Peel,
O' gipsey kith and kin:
Five wighter carlines werena foun'
The south country within."

The Border dames hesitate whether to send "The belted knight" or "The sodger youth to Lunnun town, to bring tidings:"—

"Then out spak mim-mou'd Meg of Nith,
And she spake up wi' pride;
And she wad send the sodger youth,
Whatever might betide."

Not so honest Kirkcudbright:—

"Then whiskey Jean spake owre her drink—
'Ye weel ken kimmers a',
The auld gudeman o' Lunnun town,
His back's been at the wa';
And mony a friend that kissed his cup
Is now a fremit wight,
But it's ne'er be said o' whiskey Jean—
I'll send the Border Knight.'"

I have heard Sir Walter Scott recite the verse which personifies Lochmaben, and call it "uncommonly happy:"—

"Then slow rose Marjorie o' the Lochs,
And wrinkled was her brow;
Her ancient weed was russet gray,
Her auld Scots blood was true."

"The Five Carlines," says one of Burns' biographers, "is by far the best-humored of these productions." He had not seen the Poet's Epistle on the same election, addressed to Grahame of Fintray. The original is before me: the measure was new to Burns: the poem is, I believe, new to the reader. The contest was now decided. —"The Sirens of Flattery," as the Poet said to M'Murdo, "the Harpies of Corruption and the Furies of Ambition—those infernal deities that preside over the villainous business of politics"—had retired from the field:—

"Fintray, my stay in worldly strife,
Friend of my muse, friend of my life,
Are ye as idle's I am?
Come then wi' uncouth kintra fleg,
O'er Pegasus I'll fling my leg,
And ye shall see me try him.

"I'll sing the zeal Drumlanrig bears,
Who left the all-important cares
Of princes and their darlin's,
And bent on winning borough-toons,
Came shaking hands wi' wabster loons,
And kissin' barefoot carlins.

"Combustion through our boroughs rode,
Whistling his roaring pack abroad
Of mad unmuzzled lions;
As Queensberry's 'buff and blue' unfurled,
And Westerha' and Hopetoun hurled
To every Whig defiance."

The Poet then proceeds to relate how his grace of Queensberry forsook the contending ranks—

"The unmannered dust might soil his star;
Besides, he hated bleeding,"

but left friends, soft and persuasive, behind to maintain his cause and Millar's:—

"M'Murdo and his lovely spouse
(The enamoured laurels kiss her brows)
Led on the Loves and Graces;
She won each gaping burgess' heart,
While he, all conquering, played his part
Amang the wives and lasses.

"Craigdarroch led a light-arm'd core,
Tropes, metaphors, and figures pour
Like Hecla streaming thunder;
Glenriddel, skilled in mouldy coins,
Blew up each Tory's dark designs,
And bared the treason under."

Assistance, of a kind equally effective in all such contests it seems, was restored to:—

"Millar brought up the artillery ranks,
The many-pounders of the banks."

The commotion which ensued when the contending parties met in the streets of old Dumfries, is well described:—

"As Highland crags by thunder cleft,
When lightnings fire the stormy lift,
Hurl down with crashing rattle;
As flames among a hundred woods;
As headlong foam a hundred floods—
Such is the rage of battle.

"The stubborn Tories dare to die,—
As soon the rooted oaks would fly
Before the approaching fellers;

The Whigs come on like Ocean's roar,
When all his wintry billows pour
Against the Buchan Bullers."

Forms were present, it seems, visible only to the eyes of the inspired: on the Whig side appeared an ominous personage—

"The muffled murderer of Charles."

Purer spirits, those of the Grahames, were seen on the side of the Tories. But neither the wit of woman, the might of man, nor even the presence of the celestials could hinder the defeat of Johnston and the triumph of Millar: the Poet makes his lament:—

"O that my een were flowing burns,
My voice a lioness, that mourns
Her darling cubs' undoing!
That I might weep, that I might cry,
While Tories fall, while Tories fly,
And furious Whigs pursuing!

"Thou, Pitt, shalt rue this overthrow,
And Thurlow growl a curse of woe,
And Melville melt in wailing;
How Fox and Sheridan rejoice,
And Burke shall sing 'O Prince, arise!
Thy power is all prevailing.'"

"With regard to your poor Bard," says Burns, "he is only a spectator of what he relates. Amid the hurly-burly of politics he resembles the redbreast in the storm, which shelters itself in the hedge and chirps away securely."

In the four years which intervened between this borough contest and the county election, in which Heron of Kerroughtree, was opposed by Gordon of Balmaghie, the temper of Burns seems to have suffered a serious change. In his lyrics he still sings with gentleness, and with all the delicacy which becomes true love; but in his election lampoons he is fierce and stern, and even venomous. Heron was a Whig; he had erected an altar to Independence, and, through the agency it is said of Syme, prevailed on the Poet to bring verse to the aid of his cause. The first of these effusions is a parody on "Fye! let us a' to the bridal." The Poet numbers the friends of the candidates, and as he names them gives us

a sketch, personal and mental. The portrait of Heron is happy :—

"And there will be trusty Kerroughtree,
Whose honor was ever his law ;
If the virtues were packed in a parcel,
His worth might be sample for a'."

The best stanzas are the personal ones; the following verse is very characteristic :—

"And there will be maiden Kilkerran,
And also Barskimmens' gude knight;
And there will be roaring Birkwhistle,
Wha luckily roars in the right."

He continues his catalogue; he brings "the Maxwells in droves" from the Nithsdale border; the lairds of Terraughty and Carruchan—

"And also the wild Scot of Galloway,
Sodgering gunpowder Blair."

In spite of the Poet's song and the exertions of friends, Heron lost his election: he was not, however, daunted: he contested soon after with more success the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright against the Hon. Montgomery Stewart. Burns had still the same belief in the influence of his wit, and was ready with unpremeditated verse. He accordingly imagined himself a pedlar or troggar, and, declaring that his whole stock consisted of

"The broken trade of Broughton,"

proceeded to sell, to all who ventured to buy, the characters of those who supported Stewart. Some of the descriptions of the facetious pedlar are comical enough; he disliked John Stewart, Earl of Galloway, and assailed him, with all the inveteracy of satiric verse :—

"Here's a noble earl's
Fame and high renown
For an auld sang—
It's thought the gudes were stown."

Against the Bushbys he bent the bitterest shafts in his quiver; he allowed them talent: in a former satire he says of one,

"He has gotten the heart of a Bushby,
But, Lord! what's become of the head?"

He is equally unkind in the present lampoon. Of John Bushby, of Tinwald-downs, the most accomplished of the name, and Maxwell of Cardoness, he says,—

"Here's an honest conscience
Might a prince adorn,
Frae the Downs of Tinwald
Sae was never worn:
Here's its stuff and lining,
Cardoness's head;
Fine for a sodger
A' the wale o' lead."

Muirhead, minister of Orr had an apple for his cognizance:—

"Here's armorial bearings
Frae the manse of Orr,
The crest—an old crab apple,
Rotten at the core."

The minister of Buittle was a Maxwell:—

"Here's that little wadset,
Buittle's scrap of truth,
Pawned in a gin-shop,
Quenching holy drouth."

To conclude these sharp and personal things, the Poet offers for sale the worth and wisdom of Copeland of Collieston, and, more curious still,

"Murray's fragments
Of the ten commands."

But customers seem scarce, upon which he exclaims,

"Hornie's turning chapman,
He'll buy all the pack."

And so ends his last and bitterest lampoon.—"I have privately," he says to Mr. Heron, "printed a good many copies of the ballad, and have sent them among friends all about the country. You have already, as your auxiliary, the sober detestation of mankind on the heads of your opponents; and I swear, by the lyre of Thalia, to muster on your side all the votaries of honest laughter and fair, candid ridicule." Heron, on whose side the Poet promised to muster the votaries of mirth, was victorious in the contest; but his return was petitioned against: a committee of the Commons declared him unduly elected;

and he survived this unlooked-for decision but a few days.

The wit of Burns like his native thistle, though rough and sharp, suited the multitude better than more smooth and polished things: he had not the art of cutting blocks with a razor, but dragged his victims rudely along the ground at the tail of his Pegasus. Pointed and elegant satire, while it affected the educated gentlemen against whom it was directed, would have made no impression on the shepherds and husbandmen whose scorn it was the Poet's wish to excite. The laughter and ridicule which his muse awakened had a local influence only; the satire which drove Dr. Hornbook from the parish, and made Holy Willie think of suicide, had a wider range: the lineaments by which he desired we should know his Stewarts, Maxwells, Murrays, Muirheads, and Bushbys, belonged to private life—were accidents of character or matters of imagination, and pertained not to general nature.

I turn gladly to his lyrics. His songs bear the impress of nature; he himself tells us in what way he made them. —"Until I am complete master of the tune in my own singing, such as it is, I can never compose for it. My way is this: I consider the poetic sentiment correspondent to my idea of the musical expression; then choose my theme; begin one stanza; when that is composed, which is generally the most difficult part of the business, I walk out, sit down now and then, look out for objects in nature around me that are in unison or harmony with the cogitations of my fancy and workings of my bosom; humming, every now and then, the air with the verses I have framed. When I feel my muse beginning to jade, I retire to the solitary fireside of my study, and there commit my effusions to paper; swinging, at intervals, on the hind-legs of my elbow-chair, by way of calling forth my own critical strictures as my pen goes on. Seriously, this at home is almost invariable my way." He who desires to compose lyric verse according to the character and measure of an air, will find the plan of Burns an useful one. The poet must either chaunt the tune over to himself, or be under its influence while writing, else he will

fail to get the emphatic words to harmonize with the emphatic notes.

In the art of uniting gracefully the music and words, Burns was a great master; the song which he wrote in October, 1793, to the tune of "The Quaker's Wife," echoes the music so truly that the words and air seem to have sprung from his fancy together:—

"Thine am I, my faithful fair,
Thine, my lovely Nancy;
Every pulse along my veins,
Every roving fancy."

The inspiration which produced "Lovely Nancy" came from Edinburgh; that which gave "Wilt thou be my dearie," to the air of the "Sutor's Daughter," belonged to Dumfries. The former is written with warmth—the latter with respect. He delighted little in distant modes of salutation, and was prone to imagine the subject of his song beside him, and sharing in his rapture: now and then, however, he exhibited all the polite respect which the school of chivalrous courtship could desire:—

"Lassie, say thou lo'es me;
Or if thou wilt na be my ain,
Say na thou'lt refuse me;
If it winna, canna be,
Thou for thine may choose me,
Let me, lassie, quickly die,
Trusting that thou lo'es me."

The lady Elizabeth Heron, of Heron, inspired the "Banks of Cree"—not by the charms of her person, but by the music, which is her own composition. Cree is a stream beautiful and romantic:—Cluden is another stream, which runs not smoother down the vale of Dalgonar than it runs in the song of "My bonnie dearie"—

"Hark! the mavis' evening sang,
Sounding Cluden woods amang,
Then a faulding let us gang,
My bonnie dearie;
We'll gae down by Cluden side,
Through the hazels spreading wide,
O'er the waves that sweetly glide
To the moon sae clearly."

When Burns had done searching old-wives' barrels, or

galloping under the light of the moon along the sands of Solway in search of smugglers, he retired to the solitude of his own humble dwelling, or to some lonely place, and imagining beauty to be present, sung of its influence with equal truth and elegance. The Lass of Craigie-burn-wood seems to have been a favorite model for his heroines; he advises Thomson to adopt his song in her praise, and observes,—"The lady on whom it was made is one of the finest women in Scotland; and, in fact, is to me what Sterne's Eliza was to him—a mistress, or friend, or what you will in the guileless simplicity of Platonic love. I assure you that to my lovely friend you are indebted for many of my best songs. Do you think that the sober, gin-house routine of existence, could inspire a man with life, and love, and joy—could fire him with enthusiasm, or melt him with pathos equal to the genius of your book? No, no! Whenever I want to be more than ordinary in in song—to be in some degree equal to your diviner airs —do you imagine I fast and pray for the celestial emanation? *Tout au contraire!* I have a glorious recipe—the very one that, for his own use, was invented by the god of healing and poetry, when erst he piped to the flocks of Admetus. I put myself in a regimen of admiring a fine woman, and in proportion to the adorability of her charms, in proportion are you delighted with my verses? The lightning of her eye is the godhead of Parnassus, and the witching of her smile the divinity of Helicon!"

The offspring of one of these interviews, real or imaginary, was that fine lyric—"She says she lo'es me best of a'." The lady's portrait is limned with the most exquisite skill; and the last verse contains a landscape such as the goddess of love might desire to walk in. The lonely valley, the fragrant evening, and the rising moon were frequent witnesses of his poetic rapture :—

"Let others love the city,
The gaudy show at sunny noon,
Gie me the lonely valley,
The dewy eve, and rising moon;
Fair beaming and streaming
Her silver light the boughs amang,
While falling, re-calling,
The amorous thrush concludes his sang;

There, dearest Chloris, wilt thou rove
By wimpling burn and leafy shaw,
And hear my vows of truth and love,
And say thou lo'es me best of a'!"

The influence of this lady's charms was not of short duration.—"On my visit the other day," Burns says, "to my fair Chloris, she suggested an idea, which I, in my return from the visit, wrought into the following song:

"My Chloris, mark how the green groves,
The primrose banks how fair;
The balmy gales awake the flowers,
And wave thy flaxen hair."

Having composed another pastoral song in praise of the same lady to the tune of "Rothemurches Rant," he says —"This piece has at least the merit of being a regular pastoral; the vernal morn, the summer noon, the autumnal evening, and the winter night are regularly rounded. If I can catch myself in more than an ordinary propitious moment, I shall write a new 'Craigie-burn-wood' altogether: my heart is much in the theme. The lady is not a little proud that she is to make so distinguished a figure in your collection; and I am not a little proud that I have it in my power to please her so much." The air of "Lumps of Pudding" suggested enjoyments of a less ethereal kind than those arising from beauty. On the 18th of November the frost was dry and keen. The Poet took a morning walk before breakfast, and produced one of his most delightful songs—

"Contented wi' little and cantie wi' mair,
Whene'er I forgather wi' sorrow and care,
I gie them a skelp as they're creeping alang
Wi' a cog o' gude swats, and an auld Scottish sang.

"I whyles claw the elbow o' troublesome thought,
But man is a sodger, and life is a faught;
My mirth and good humor are coin in my pouch,
And my freedom's my lairdship nae monarch dare touch."

When his spirit was in the right mood for song, Burns generally remembered his country: indeed, the glory of Scotland was as dear to his heart as his own fame. This sentiment he gave full utterance to in his song "Their groves o' sweet myrtle." He muses on the bright summers and perfumed vales of Italy, and then turns to

the glen of green breckan, where the burn glimmers under the yellow broom, on whose banks he had held tryste with his Jean. The conclusion which he makes is at once national and affectionate :—

"Though rich is the breeze in their gay sunny valleys,
And cauld Caledonia's blast on the wave,
Their sweet-scented woodlands that skirt the proud palace,
What are they? the haunt of the tyrant and slave.
The slave's spicy forests and gold-bubbling fountains
The brave Caledonian views with disdain;
He wanders as free as the winds of his mountains,
Save love's willing fetters—the chains of his Jean."

That the Poet loved his country, he has shown in many a lasting verse; but when he thought of the splendid possessions of the mean and the sordid, and of the gold descending in showers on the heads of the dull and the undeserving, it required all his poetic philosophy to hinder him from repining. He had sung in other days of the honest joys and fireside happiness of husbandmen: he now endeavoured to pour the healing balm of verse upon the wounded spirits of the poor, the humble, and the unhappy. The song of "For a' that, and a' that," must have been welcome to many. It flew like wildfire over the land: the sentiments accorded with the natural desire of man to be free and equal and, though not permitted to be sung in the streets of some of our northern boroughtowns, it was chaunted among the hills and dales by every tongue. In January, 1795, Burns introduced it in these words to Thomson:—"A great critic on song, Aiken, says that love and wine are the exclusive themes for song-writing. The following is on neither subject, and consequently is no song: but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme." There are five verses in all, and every one strikes the balance against rank in favor of poverty—

"A king can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Gude faith he mauna fa' that:
For a' that, and a' that,
Our toils obscure and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea-stamp,
The man's the gowd for a' that."

Those who judge of the peace of mind and happiness of the Poet by the sentiments of affection and rapture which he expresses so easily and so elegantly in his songs, would imagine that he lived in a sort of paradise, beset by temptation certainly, yet triumphing alike over political hatred and social allurements. His bright outbursts of verse flashed like sunshine amid a winter storm; they were fever-fits of gladness and joy—came too seldom, and their coming could not be calculated upon.—The inquisitorial proceedings of the Commissioners of Excise had a deep share in the ruin of Burns. He was permitted to continue on his seventy pounds a-year, with the chance of rising to the station of supervisor by seniority; but the hope of becoming collector could no more be indulged—it was a matter of political patronage.—From that time forward, something seemed to prey on the Poet's mind: he believed himself watched and marked; he hurried from company into solitude, and from solitude into company; when alone, he was melancholy and desponding—when at table, his mirth was often wild and obstreperous; he had passionate bursts of pathos and unbridled sallies of humor, more than were natural to him.

He had for some time looked on men of rank with jealousy; he now spoke of them in a way that amounted to dislike.—"Let me remind you," he thus writes to David M'Culloch of Ardwell, June 21, 1794, "of your kind promise to accompany me to Kerroughtree; I will need all the friends I can muster; for I am indeed ill at ease whenever I approach your honorables and right honorables." In a letter to his friend Cunningham, he speaks of the conceited dignity which even Scottish lordlings, of seven centuries standing, display when they mix accidentally with the many-aproned sons of mechanical life. "I remember," he says, "in my plough-boy days I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave: how ignorant are plough-boys."

Something of the same stern spirit may be found in many places of his correspondence. He seemed to imagine that he could not be in the company of men of rank

without having to acknowledge his own inferior condition in life; he did not feel so much as he ought that his genius raised him to an equality with peers, and even princes; or, if he felt it fully, he certainly failed to act up to it. He appeared, too, to apprehend, that courtesy on his part might be taken for servility, and he desired to show, by silent and surly haughtiness, that he might be broken, but would not bend. Even his most intimate friends he now and then put at arms-length; and if he made a present of a song or a new edition of his poems to any one, he generally recorded it as a gift of affection, and not as an act of homage.—"Will Mr. M'Murdo," he says, in 1793, do me the favor to accept of these volumes? a trifling but sincere mark of the very high respect I bear for his worth as a man, his manners as a gentleman, and his kindness as a friend. However inferior now or afterwards I may rank as a poet, one honest virtue to which few poets can pretend, I trust I shall ever claim as mine —to no man, whatever his station in life or his power to serve me, have I ever paid a compliment at the expense of truth."

The witty boldness of his remarks, and the sarcastic freedom of his opinions in matters both of church and state, it must be confessed, were such as to startle the timid and alarm the devout. He was numbered among those who were possessed with a republican spirit, and all who had any hopes of rising through political influence were more willing to find Burns by chance than seek his company of their own free will. This will account for the coldness with which many of the stately aristocracy of the district regarded him. Mr. Maculloch of Ardwell has been heard to relate, that, on visiting Dumfries one fine evening, to attend a ball given during the week of the races, he saw Burns walking on the south side of the "plain-stanes," while the central part was crowded with ladies and gentlemen drawn together for the festivities of the night. Not one of them took any notice of the Poet; on which Mr. Maculloch went up to him, took his arm and wished him to join the gentry.—"Nay, nay," he said, "that's all over with me now.

'O were we young how as we ance hae been,
We should hae been galloping down on yon green,
And linking it owre the lily-white lea,
And were na my heart light I wad die.'"

He took his friend home; and while Mrs. Burns, with her sweet and melodious voice, sung one of her husband's latest lyrics, the Poet prepared a bowl of social punch, which they discussed with no little mirth and glee till the hour of the ball arrived. A gentleman, the other day, told me that when he visited Dumfries in the year 1793, he was warned by one or more of the leading men of the county to avoid the society of Burns, who neither believed in religion as the kirk believed, nor took the fashion of his politics from the government.

Burns imputed his disgrace in the excise to the officers of a regiment then lying in Dumfries, some of whom, he believed, informed the government of his rash language. That he seldom spoke of them but with bitterness and scorn, his correspondence will in some places witness.—"I meant," he thus writes to Mrs. Riddel, "to have called on you yesternight; but as I edged up to your box-door, the first object which greeted my view was one of those lobster-coated puppies, sitting like another dragon guarding the Hesperian fruit. On the conditions and capitulations you so obligingly offer, I shall certainly make my rustic phiz a part of your box-furniture on Tuesday."

His dislike of soldiers found its way into his conversation.—"When I was at Arbigland in 1793," said my accomplished friend Mrs. Montagu, "I was introduced to Burns. His conversation pleased me much, and I saw him often. I was at a ball given by the Caledonian Hunt in Dumfries, and had stood up as the partner of a young officer in the dance, when the whisper of 'there's Burns!' ran through the assembly. I looked round, and there he was—his bright dark eyes full upon me. I shall never forget that look—it was one that gave me no pleasure.—He soon left the meeting. I saw him next day. He would have passed me, but I spoke. I took his arm and said, come, you must see me home. 'Gladly, madam,' said he; 'but I'll not go down the plain-stanes, lest I have to share your company with some of those epaulet-

ted puppies with whom the street is full. Come this way.' We went to Captain Hamilton's. Burns, I remember, took up a newspaper in which some of the letters of a man of genius lately dead were printed. 'This is sad,' he said: 'did I imagine that one-half of the letters which I have written would be published when I die, I would this moment recal them and burn them without redemption.'" Col. Jenkinson, who commanded the Cinque-Ports cavalry, inherited, it would seem, the dislike of his brother soldiers to the Poet; he refused to be introduced to Burns. And never even spoke to him.—This was not in keeping with the character of the mild and gentle Earl of Liverpool.

Of his situation as an exciseman, Burns seldom spoke with much cordiality. He generally introduced it with an apology, and coupled it with something which carried the mind into a new train of thought. "Amid all my hurry of business," he writes in 1792 to Cunningham, "grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the excise—making ballads and then drinking and singing them, I might have stolen five minutes to dedicate to one of the first of friends and fellow-creatures." Two years afterwards he writes with some bitterness:—"I am a miserable hurried devil, and for private reasons, am forced, like Milton's Satan,

'To do what yet, though damn'd, I would abhor.'"

Of his prospects as a revenue officer, we have his own account given to Patrick Heron, whom he had aided at the hustings with election squibs.—"I am on the supervisor's list; and as we come on there by precedency, in two or three years I shall be at the head of the list, and be appointed, of course. Then a FRIEND might be of service to me in getting me into a part of the kingdom which I would like. A supervisor's income varies from about one hundred and twenty to two hundred a-year; but the business is an incessant drudgery, and would be nearly a complete bar to every species of literary pursuit. The moment I am appointed supervisor in the common routine, I may be nominated on the collector's list, and this is always a business purely of political patronage.—A collectorship varies from better than two hundred a

year to near a thousand. They also come forward by precedency on the list, and have besides a handsome income, a life of complete leisure. A life of literary leisure, with a decent competence, is the summit of my wishes. It would be the prudish affectation of silly pride in me to say that I do not need, nor would not be indebted to, a political friend. At the same time, sir, I by no means lay my affairs before you, thus to hook my dependent situation on your benevolence."

During this period of the life of Burns, and indeed as early as the close of the year 1792, some of his friends hearkening to rumors injurious to his name, volunteered counsel or reproof. The wreck of all his speculations and hopes preyed on his mind, and he sought to escape in company from his own reflections. To one of his sensibility of mind, the future loured ominous and dark.—The company of a man of his eminence, and wonderful colloquial powers, was much in request; for many loved his genius, and all did not fear the frowns of men in office. Mrs. Dunlop was the first that admonished.—"You must not think, as you seem to insinuate," replied the Poet, "that in my way of life I want exercise. Of that I have enough: but occasional hard drinking is the devil to me. Against this I have again and again bent my resolution, and have greatly succeeded. Taverns I have totally abandoned. It is the private parties in the family way, among the hard-drinking gentlemen of this county, that do me the mischief—but even this I have more than half given over." The view which Burns takes of his situation is illustrated by an apology tendered to Mrs. Riddel, after a social bout at her too hospitable table.—"I write you," he says, "from the regions of hell, amid the horrors of the damned. Here am I, laid on a bed of pitiless furze, while an infernal tormenter, wrinkled and cruel, called Recollection, with a whip of scorpions, forbids peace or rest to approach me, and keeps anguish eternally awake. I wish I could be reinstated in the good opinion of the fair circle, whom my conduct last night so much offended! To the men of the company I will make no apology. Your husband, who insisted on my drinking more than I chose, has no right

to blame me, and the other gentlemen were partakers of my guilt." The Poet erred as others erred.

It must have surprised Burns not a little when William Nicol lifted up his voice and admonished him.—The Poet answered in a manner so cutting and ironical, that the irascible pedant was silent ever afterwards.—"O! thou wisest among the wise, meridian blaze of prudence, full moon of discretion, and chief of many counsellors; how infinitely is thy rattleheaded, wrong-headed slave indebted to thy supereminent goodness, that, from the luminous path of thy own right-lined rectitude, thou lookest benignly down on an erring wretch, of whom the zigzag wanderings defy all the powers of calculation, from the simple copulation of units up to the hidden mysteries of fluxions! From the cave of my ignorance, amid the fogs of my dulness, and pestilential fumes of my political heresies, I look up to thee, as doth a toad through the iron-barred lucerne of a pestiferous dungeon to the cloudless glory of a summer sun! Sorely sighing, in bitterness of soul I say, when shall my name be the quotation of the wise, and my countenance be the delight of the godly, like the illustrious lord of Laggan's many hills—that father of proverbs and master of maxims—that antipode of folly and magnet among the sages, the wise and witty Willie Nicol? As for thee, thy thoughts are pure, and thy lips are holy—never did the unhallowed breath of the powers of darkness and the pleasures of darkness pollute the sacred flame of thy sky-descended and heaven-bound desires. O! that like thine were the tenor of my life! like thine the tenor of my conversation—then should no friend fear for my strength, no enemy rejoice in my weakness."

The indifferent success of Nicol seems not to have awed John Syme, who, in his parlor at Ryedale one afternoon, when the wine flowed and the Poet was gracious and confidential, took upon him the ungentle task of admonishing his guest.—"I might have spoken daggers," said he, "but I did not mean them: Burns shook to the inmost fibre of his frame, and drew his sword-cane, when I exclaimed, 'What! wilt thou thus, and in mine own house?' The poor fellow was so stung with

remorse, that he dashed himself down on the floor."—Syme told the story, in a rather darker manner, to Sir Walter Scott, who thus related it in one of his criticisms. —"It is a dreadful truth that, when racked and tortured by the well-meant and warm expostulations of an intimate friend, he started up in a paroxysm of frenzy, and, drawing a sword-cane which he usually wore, made an attempt to plunge it into the body of his adviser—the next instant he was with difficulty withheld from suicide."—I have heard a much gentler version of the story: indeed it has several variations, and a biographer has some latitude of choice. This is the last and mildest.—"When I expostulated with Burns," said Syme, "he stared at me, and with such fury of look, that had a sword been in his hand, I am sure he would have run me through."

There is no doubt that the Poet was strongly moved. When his friend took it upon him to speak of the evil of his ways, did he lecture him upon the madness which wine excites—upon the sinfulness of incontinence, or on the guilt of pocketing money from a Tory government while he was himself a democrat or a Whig? Admonition from Syme upon one or all of these topics of reproach was more likely to induce the Poet to laugh, as he did at Nicol, than to make him draw his sword.—"O! Geordie man," said King James, "it was grand to hear Baby Charles laying down the guilt of dissimulation, and Steenie lecturing on the turpitude of incontinence." I cannot disprove the story, nor yet can I altogether believe it.

This strange tale induced some to believe that Burns was capable of drawing his sword on the unarmed and defenceless. Those who are persuaded of that will feel disposed to doubt his courage in a dispute into which he was precipitated during a drinking bout at a friend's table.—"I was I know," he says, "drunk last night, but I am sober this morning. From the expressions Captain — made use of to me, had I nobody's welfare to care for but my own, we should certainly have come, according to the manner of the world, to the necessity of murdering one another about the business. The words were such as generally, I believe, end in a brace of pistols; but I

am still pleased to think that I did not risk the peace and welfare of a wife and children in a drunken squabble. You know that the report of certain political opinions being mine has already brought me to the brink of destruction. I dread last night's business may be interpreted the same way. You, I beg, will take care to prevent it. I tax your wish for my welfare with that of waiting, as soon as possible, on every gentleman who was present, and state this to him, and, as you please, show him this letter. What, after all, was the obnoxious toast? 'May our success in the present war be equal to the justice of our cause.' A toast that the most outrageous frenzy of loyalty cannot object to."

I know not what the import of those words were in the year 1795; they seem harmless enough now: but a disloyal meaning seems to have been attached to them by some gunpowder captain, who desired to find that practice at home among civilians which he might have obtained from disciplined hands abroad. He seems to have felt that some insult to the government was meant, though he did not exactly understand what, and bit his glove in token of mortal wrath. With the morning, sobriety brought reflection to both sides; and Clarke found little trouble in restoring harmony, which is lucky; for had a duel ensued, the Poet's biographer would have experienced some difficulty in accounting for it. It was probably on this occasion that Burns bought a brace of pistols from Johnson, the gunsmith, and having tried them wrote—"I have proved the pistols, and can say of them, what I would not do of the bulk of mankind—they are an honor to their maker."

Amid these intemperate quarrels and political heart-burnings, the muse of Burns was not wholly idle; confounded though she no doubt was, with the unmelodious and mingled cries of loyalty and sedition which filled every borough town, she not only inspired lyrics, tender and harmonious, but added a poem or two to those already published. Among the latter are some felicitous verses to "The Maxwells' veteran chief," the Laird of of Terraughty, on his birth day.

"If envious buckies view wi' sorrow
Thy lengthened days on this blest morrow,

May Desolation's lang-teeth'd harrow,
Nine miles an hour,
Rake them like Sodom and Gomorrha
In brunstane stoure."

The true spirit of the Poet flashes out also in his "Address to the Tooth-ache:" there are few who cannot attest the accuracy of the description:—

"My curse upon thy venom'd stang,
That shoots my tortured gums alang,
And through my lugs gives mony a twang,
Wi' knawing vengeance,
Tearing my nerves wi' bitter pang,
Like racking engines.

"Of a' the numerous human dools,
Ill hars'ts, daft bargains, cutty stools,
Or worthy friends raked i' the mools,
Sad sight to see,
The tricks o' knaves, the fash o' fools,
Thou bear'st the gree."

It was now his pleasure to satirize the beautiful Maria Woodleigh—Mrs. Riddel. How this fair and favored lady happened to move his indignation, is something of a mystery. She was young and accomplished: her verses have more of nature in them than the ordinary lines of lady-poetesses; and her letters are lively and witty, and partake not a little of the sarcastic turn of the Poet's own mind. On introducing her in 1793 to Smellie, Burns said, "She has one unlucky failing—a failing which you will easily discover, as she seems rather pleased with indulging in it—and a failing which you will easily pardon, as it is a sin which very much besets yourself. Where she dislikes or despises, she is as apt to make no more a secret of it than where she esteems and respects." In a rhyme epistle Burns seems to complain that this young beauty paid more respect to others than to himself:—

"I see her face the first of Ireland's sons,
And even out-Irish his Hibernian bronze.
The hopeful youth in Scotia's senate bred,
Who owns a Bushby's heart without the head,
Comes mid a string of coxcombs to display
That *veni, vidi, vici!* is his way.
The shrinking Bard adown an alley skulks,
And dreads a meeting as he dreads the hulks;
Though there his heresies in church and state
Might well award him Muir and Palmer's fate."

Though severe in his poem, for he calls her

"A wit in folly and a fool in wit,"

he reserves his sharpest satire for a regular monody on her memory: he looks on her grave, and exclaims—

"How cold is that bosom which folly once fired,
How pale is that cheek where the rouge lately glisten'd;
How silent that tongue which the echoes oft tired,
How dull is that ear which to flattery so listened!"

He refrains from calling on the Loves and Graces to attend, but summons the offspring of Folly to shower over her idle weeds and typical nettles. He then imagines a monument:—

"We'll sculpture the marble, we'll measure the lay—
Here Vanity strums on her idiot lyre;
There keen Indignation shall dart on his prey,
Which spurning Contempt shall redeem from his ire."

This sarcastic monody was widely circulated, nor was the object of it kept a secret. In the printed copies the name is Eliza—but why should the truth be concealed? It is to the honor of Mrs. Riddel that, though affected with the lampoon at first, she soon relented, and not only forgave the author and received him into favor, but when laid in the grave, and the envious and malicious were making mouths at his fame, she vindicated his aspersed character; and, in an article written with great tenderness and truth, gave us the right image of the man and the poet.

In the year 1795, Britain was threatened by an army of French republicans, and Pitt, in the words of Scott,

"Brought the freeman's arm to aid the freeman's laws."

Burns at once enrolled himself in the band of gentlemen volunteers of Dumfries, though not without oppositi on from some of the haughty Tories, who demurred about his principles, which they called democratic. I remember well the appearance of that respectable corps; their odd, but not ungraceful dress; white kerseymere breeches and waistcoat; short blue coat, faced with red; and round hat, surmounted by a bearskin, like the helmets of our horse-guards; and I remember the Poet also—his very swarthy face, his ploughman-stoop, his large dark eyes, and indifferent dexterity in the handling of his arms.

When those "sons of sedition, Syme, Burns, and Maxwell," as a dull epigram of that day worded it, were admitted into the volunteers, it was not without hope that a heroic song, rivalling "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled," might be forthcoming. At a public dinner of the corps, when Burns desired leave to give a toast, the proposal was received with rapturous applause, and something high was hoped for.—"Gentlemen," said he, "may we never see the French—and may the French never see us:" it was drunk, but with a murmur of disapprobation. The Poet felt this; and, on going home, wrote that characteristic and truly national song—"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?" He sent it to Jackson's Dumfries Journal—a great number of copies were struck off with the music in Edinburgh, and widely circulated by the author.

This lyric may be looked on as containing the sentiments of Burns in matters of government: it reëchoed the admirable letter which he addressed to Erskine of Mar, and expressed what all lovers of Britain felt then, or feel now, on the subject of change and alteration:—

"Does haughty Gaul invasion threat?
Then let the loons beware, sir,
There's wooden walls upon our seas,
And volunteers on shore, sir:
The Nith shall rin to Corsincon,
And Criffel sink in Solway,
Ere we permit a foreign foe
On British ground to rally.

"O! let us not, like snarling curs,
In wrangling be divided,
Till slap come in an unco loon,
And wi' a rung decide it.
Be Britain still to Britain true,
Amang ourselves united;
For never but by British hands
Maun British wrangs be righted."

This song hit the taste and suited the feelings of the humbler classes, who added it to "The poor and honest Sodger," the "Song of Death," and "Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled." Hills echoed with it; it was heard in every street, and did more to right the mind of the rustic part of the population than all the speeches of Pitt and Dundas, or of the chosen "Five-and-forty."

At Midsummer, 1794, Burns removed his increasing family from the Bank-Vennel to Mill-hole-brae, where he leased a small house of two stories—plain and humble, but commodious. This street is connected with a wide and respectable one, called the Kirk-gate; is near the bleaching or parade-ground, on the river-side—a favorite walk in the summer mornings and evenings for the citizens of Dumfries. The choice, though respectable enough, was not a poetical one; but the house suited his humble circumstances; and here he arranged his small library, fixed his table, and placed the chair on whose hind-legs, as he relates, he poised or swung himself, when conceiving his matchless lyrics. Here, too, I have heard his townsmen say, while passing by during a pleasant afternoon, they could see, within the open door, the Poet reading amongst his children; while his wife moved about, set matters in order, and looked to the economy of her household. He was welcomed to his new house by most of his early friends; and the ladies, who sympathized in his fortunes, were among the foremost. Of these, one of the mildest and gentlest was Jessie Lewars, now Mrs. Thomson, the sister of a brother gauger; she felt the genius, and perceived, with Mrs. Burns, the fading looks and declining health of the Poet, and ministered unto him and his young family with all the affection of a daughter.

Burns still continued to correspond with several distinguished persons; the circle of his friends had, however, gradually diminished; the demon of politics made some cold; distance rendered others forgetful; and death had removed one or two to whom he looked up for countenance and support. Riddel of Friars-Carse, in whose company he took much pleasure, died towards the close of 1794; and the last time that Burns was in that neighbourhood, he visited the Hermitage, and wrote on the window,—

> "To Riddel, much lamented man,
> This ivied cot was dear;
> Reader, dost value matchless worth?
> This ivied cot revere."

Sickness and death came next to the Poet's own house-

hold.—"I have lately," he says to Mrs. Dunlop, "drunk deep of the cup of affliction. The autumn robbed me of my only daughter and darling child, and that at a distance too, and so rapidly, as to put it out of my power to pay the last duties to her. I had scarcely begun to recover from that shock, when I became myself the victim of a most severe rheumatic fever; and long the die spun doubtful, until, after many weeks of a sick bed, it seems to have turned up life, and I am beginning to crawl across my room, and once, indeed, have been before my own door in the street." To the same lady he again writes, as he ever wrote to her, in a strain of serious thought and deep emotion:—"There had much need be many pleasures annexed to the states of husband and father; for, God knows, they have many peculiar cares. I cannot describe to you the anxious, sleepless hours these ties frequently give me. I see a train of helpless little folks; me and my exertions all their stay; and on what a brittle thread does the life of man hang! If I am nipt off at the command of fate—even in all the vigor of manhood, as I am, such things happen every day—gracious God! what would become of my little flock? 'Tis here that I envy your people of fortune."

The Poet was now and then in a more sportive mood; despondency was lifted from him like a cloud, and his mind lay in sunshine for an hour or so, till reflection darkened it down again. He loved to ponder on the fate of men of genius.—"There is not," he said to Helen Craik of Arbigland, "among all the martyrologies that ever were penned, so rueful a narrative as the lives of the poets. In the comparative view of wretches, the criterion is not what they are doomed to suffer but what they are able to bear. Take a being of our kind; give him a stronger imagination and a more delicate sensibility—which, between them, will ever engender a more ungovernable set of passions than are the usual lot of man; implant in him an irresistible impulse to some idle vagary—such as arranging wild flowers in fantastical nosegays, tracing the grasshopper to his haunt by his chirping song, watching the frisks of the little minnows in the sunny pool, or hunting after the intrigues of butterflies; in short,

send him adrift after some pursuit which shall eternally mislead him from the paths of lucre, and yet curse him with a keener relish than any man living for the pleasures that lucre can purchase; fill up the measure of his woes by bestowing on him a spurning sense of his own dignity—and you have created a wight nearly as miserable as a poet."

Burns looked with a mistrusting eye towards future fortune; he saw no outlet for his ambition; poetry had done all for him that poetry was likely to do; and he desired distinction without the means of gratifying it. He sometimes lamented to friends that he could not find his way into the House of Commons; he felt a strong call towards oratory, and all who heard him speak—and some of them were excellent judges—admitted his wonderful quickness of apprehension and readiness of eloquence. He seemed inclined to believe that misfortune had marked him out for her own, and that evil was the only certainty in life.—"In this short stormy day of fleeting existence," he observes to Mrs. Montagu, "when you now and then meet with an individual whose acquaintance is a real acquisition, there are all the probabilities against you that you will never meet with that character more. On the other hand, if there is any miscreant whom you hate, or creature whom you despise, the ill run of chances will be so against you, that, in the jostlings and turnings of life, pop at some unlucky corner eternally comes the wretch upon you, and will not allow your indignation or contempt one moment's repose."

It cannot be denied that Burns had a fancy fruitful in images of misery—that he looked on earth and thought the water nought and the ground barren, and believed its surface to be infested with a hundred dolts and scoundrels for one wise and honest man.—"Sunday," says the Poet to Mrs. Riddel, "closes a period of our curst revenue business, and may probably keep me employed with my pen till noon—fine employment for a Poet's pen! There is a species of the human genus that I call the gin-horse class: what amiable dogs they are! round, and round, and round they go. Mundell's ox that turns his

cotton-mill is their exact prototype—without an idea or wish beyond their circle; fat, sleek, stupid, patient, quiet, and contented; while here I sit, altogether Novemberish, a damned mélange of fretfulness and melancholy, not enough of the one to rouse me to passion, nor of the other to repose me in torpor; my soul flouncing and fluttering round her tenement like a wildfinch caught amid the horrors of winter and newly thrust into a cage. Well, I am persuaded it was of me the Hebrew sage prophesied when he foretold: 'And behold, on whatsoever this man doth set his heart, it shall not prosper.'"

During the year 1795, rumor was busy with the name of Burns. Those—and I am sorry to say they were not few—who longed for his halting, whispered about that he was become a lover of low company—a seeker of consolation against imaginary woes, in the bottle; and that in his howff, as he called the Globe tavern, he forgot what was due to his dignity of mind and his domestic peace; nay, they hesitated not to insinuate that his very genius was sunk and fallen, like Milton's Satan, from its original brightness. Much of this required no refutation. Burns was fallen off, indeed!—not in brightness of genius, but in vigor and health. His walks were shorter, his rests more frequent; his smile had something of melancholy in it, and amid the sons of men he looked like one marked out for an early grave. My friend, Mrs. Hyslop—daughter of Mr. Geddes of Leith—happened to meet him one day in the streets of Dumfries, and was affected by his appearance. He stooped more than was his wont; his dress, about which he used to be rather nice, was disordered and shabby, and he bore on his face the stamp of internal sorrow. The meeting was cordial and warm; on parting he wrung her brother, who accompanied her, earnestly by the hand, turned half away from him, and said, "I am going to ruin as fast as I can; the best I can do is to go consistently."

At this period some of the lofty aristocracy of the country shunned the Poet's company, not for his conduct as a man, but for his sentiments as a politician. That Burns was frequently in the company of the tradesmen of Dumfries, and joined in their socialities, is perfectly

true; his small income hindered him from seeking loftier society: he who has only a shilling in his pocket, must be contented with humble friends. But it is untrue that this was the only company he kept; some of the first gentlemen in the land were still his friends; he was a welcome and an invited guest at their tables, and might be seen walking with their wives and their daughters, when his health enabled him to go abroad.

The best answer which such malevolent representations could receive, has been given by Gray and Findlater; both of these gentlemen lived near the Poet; they were wise and sensible men, and incapable of misrepresentation.—"It came under my own view professionally," said the former, "that Burns superintended the education of his children with a degree of care, that I have never seen surpassed. In the bosom of his family he spent many an hour, directing the studies of his eldest son, a boy of uncommon talents. I have frequently found him explaining to this youth, then not more than nine years of age, the poets from Shakspeare to Gray, or storing his mind with examples of heroic virtue, as they live in the pages of the English historians. I would ask any person of common candor, if employments like these are consistent with habitual drunkenness? It is not denied that he sometimes mingled with society unworthy of him; he was of a social and convivial nature. In his morning hours, I never saw him like one suffering from the effects of last night's intemperance." Almost the last words that Gray uttered to me before he went to India were about Burns:—"I was sometimes surprised," he said, "at the vigor and elegance of Robert's versions from the Latin. I told him he got help; he looked up in my face and said, 'Yes, my father helps me.'"

The testimony of Findlater is equally decisive:—"My connexion with Burns," he observed, "commenced immediately after his admission to the excise, and continued to the hour of his death. In all that time the superintendence of his behaviour, as an officer of the revenue, was a branch of my especial province, and I was not an inattentive observer of the general conduct of a man and a Poet so celebrated by his countrymen. He was exem-

plary in his attention, and was even jealous of the least imputation on his vigilance. It was not till near the latter end of his days that there was any falling off in this respect; and this was well accounted for by the pressure of disease and accumulating infirmities. I will further avow, that I never saw him—which was very frequently while he lived at Ellisland, and still more so, almost every day, after he removed to Dumfries—in hours of business but he was quite himself, and capable of discharging the duties of his office; nor was he ever known to drink by himself, or seen to indulge in the use of liquor in a forenoon. I have seen Burns in all his various phases—in his convivial moments, in his sober moods, and in the bosom of his family. Indeed, I believe I saw more of him than any other individual had occasion to see, and I never beheld any thing like the gross enormities with which he is now charged. That when he sat down in the evening with friends whom he liked, he was apt to prolong the social hour beyond the bounds which prudence would dictate, is unquestionable; but, in his family, I will venture to say, he was never seen otherwise than as attentive and affectionate in a high degree."

Professor Walker, a gentleman of unquestioned candor, was two days in the Poet's company, during November, 1795.—"I went to Dumfries," he says, "and called upon him early in the forenoon. I found him in a small house; he was sitting on a window-seat, reading, with the doors open, and the family arrangements going on in his presence, and altogether without that appearance of snugness and seclusion which a studious man requires. After conversing with him for some time, he proposed a walk, and promised to conduct me through some of his favorite haunts. We accordingly quitted the town, and wandered a considerable way up the beautiful banks of the Nith. Here he gave me an account of his latest productions, and repeated some satirical ballads which he had composed; these I thought inferior to his other pieces, though they had some lines in which vigor compensated for coarseness. He repeated also a fragment of an Ode to Liberty, with marked and peculiar

energy, and showed a disposition, which was easily repressed, to make political remarks."

To this picture of the first day I shall add a sketch of the second:—"On the next morning I returned with a friend, and we found him ready to pass part of the day with us at the inn. On this occasion I did not think him so interesting as he had appeared at his outset. His conversation was too elaborate; in his praise and censure he was so decisive as to render a dissent from his judgment difficult to be reconciled with the laws of good breeding. His wit was not more licentious than it is in higher circles, though I thought him rather unnecessarily free in the avowal of his excesses. When it began to grow late he showed no disposition to retire, but called for fresh supplies of liquor with a freedom which might be excusable, as we were in an inn and no condition had been made, though it might have been inferred—had the inference been welcome—that he was to consider himself as our guest: nor was it till he saw us worn out that he departed, about three in the morning, with a reluctance that probably proceeded less from being deprived of our company than from being confined to his own. I discovered in his conduct no errors which I had not seen in men who stood high in the favor of society. He on this occasion drank freely without being intoxicated: a circumstance from which I concluded, not only that his constitution was still unbroken, but that he was not addicted to solitary cordials. Had he tasted liquor in the morning he must have easily yielded to the excess of the evening." A grave Professor was not likely to speak in commendation of the late hours and deep socialities practised by the Dumfrieshire topers; men in those days seldom quitted the bottle or the punch-bowl before daylight came to show the way home; and it was likely that Burns imagined he was asserting a proper independence when he desired more liquor and consulted his own inclination.

New year's day, 1796, found the Poet under a triple visitation of poverty, domestic sorrow, and ill health: it is not known that he uttered any complaints; if he desired life it was less for himself than for his wife and children.

There is something to me inexpressibly touching in the request which he made to his collector and paymaster, Mitchell, for the humble stipend then due and without which he would have been unable to meet the new year's morning. To render it more acceptable he made it in rhyme:—

"Friend of the Poet, tried and leal,
Wha wanting thee might beg or steal,
Alake! alake! the mickle deil,
Wi' a' his witches,
Are at it skelping jig and reel,
In my poor pouches."

To this request, which it seems he hesitated to make, Burns adds a mournful postscript concerning his health:—

"You've heard this while how I've been licket,
And by fell Death was nearly nicket:
Grim loon, he gat me by the fecket,
And sair me shook;
But by gude luck, I lap a wicket,
And turned a nook."

His illness now alarmed his friends. Maxwell, with equal skill and kindness of heart, attended him carefully: De Peyster, his colonel, a rough veteran, and a rhymer if not a poet, visited him and made frequent inquiries: the ailing man was touched with these attentions, and thanked his commander in verse. I shall transcribe a couple of stanzas—he is always his own best biographer:—

"My honored colonel, deep I feel
Your interest in the Poet's weal,
Ah! now sma' heart have I to speel
The steep Parnassus,
Surrounded thus by bolus, pill,
And potion glasses."

This world, he goes on to say, would be pleasant, if care and sickness would stay away, and fortune favor worth and merit according to their deservings—the strain concludes sadly:—

"Dame Life, though fiction out may trick her,
And in paste gems, and frippery deck her,
Oh! flickering, feeble, and unsicker
I've found her still,
Ay wavering like the willow wicker,
'Tween gude and ill."

In his lines to Mitchell, Burns seems to acknowledge—for he never spared himself—that he owed some of his illness to folly: in his verses to De Peyster he intimates his meaning more clearly,and blames, but good-humoredly, the spirit of evil—for

> "Showing us the tempting ware,
> Bright wines, and bonnie lasses fair,
> To put us daft."

Thomson began to feel alarm at the ominous silence of the Poet, and inquired the cause; the answer was written in April.—"Alas! I fear it will be some time ere I tune my lyre again. 'By Babel's streams I've sat and wept,' almost ever since I saw you last: I have only known existence by the pressure of the heavy hand of sickness, and have counted time by the repercussions of pain. Rheumatism, cold, and fever have formed to me a terrible combination. I close my eyes in misery, and open them without hope. I look on the vernal day, and say, with poor Fergusson—

> 'Say, wherefore has an all-indulgent Heaven,
> Light to the comfortless and wretched given?'"

The inquiries of Thomson induced his fancy once more to take flight in song: Burns had formerly, in health, sung of beauty with

> "Cheeks like apples, which the sun had rudded"

and adorned with smiles: he looked around, and seeing Jessie Lewars watching over him with anxiety on her brow and tenderness in her eyes, he honored her with one of his happiest songs: it bears her name, and is the last perfect offspring of his muse. In all the compass of verse there is nothing more touching than this exquisite stanza:—

> "Altho' thou maun never be mine,
> Altho' even hope is denied,
> 'Tis sweeter for thee despairing
> Than aught in the world beside."

As the same young lady was moving with a light foot about the house, lest she should disturb him, the Poet took up a crystal goblet which contained wine and water for moistening his lips, and wrote on it with a diamond,—

"Fill me with the rosy wine:
Call a toast—a toast divine,
Give the Poet's darling flame,
Lovely Jessie be the name;
Then thou mayest freely boast
Thou hast given a peerless toast."

Though now and then well enough to walk out in the sunshine, or visit a neighbour, Burns was no longer able to do his duties in the Excise. Stobie kindly undertook to perform them for him, else the Poet might have starved; for it is the rule—and a cruel and unjust one—in the Customs, to give but half-pay to the sick or those unable to work. When the birth-day of the king came, his friend Mrs. Riddel, desirous of soothing or pleasing him, requested him to accompany her to the assembly held in the evening, and show his loyalty.—"I am," said he, "in such miserable health, as to be incapable of showing my loyalty in any way. Racked as I am with rheumatism, I meet every face with a greeting like that of Balak to Balaam,—'Come curse me Jacob; and come defy me Israel.' So say I; come curse me that east wind, and come defy me the north. Would you have me, in such circumstances, copy you out a love-song. I will not be at the ball. Why should I? Man delights not me, nor woman neither. Can you supply me with the song, 'Let us all be unhappy together;' do so, and oblige *le pauvre* miserable Robert Burns."

Well or ill, his heart was still with the muse. He began to feel that he was soon to pass from among the living, and became solicitous about his fame.—"I have no copies of the songs I sent you," he says to Thomson, "and I have taken a fancy to review them all, and possibly may mend some of them; so, when you have complete leisure, I will thank you for the originals, or copies. I had rather be the author of five well-written songs than of ten otherwise." This request refers to those lyrics hitherto unpublished, of which Thomson had nearly fifty; it is needless to say that this revisal the poet did not live to perform.

To Johnson, proprietor of the Museum, Burns wrote on the 4th of July,—"You may probably think that for some time past I have neglected you and your work; but

alas! the hand of pain, and sorrow, and care has these many months lain heavy upon me. Personal and domestic affliction have almost entirely banished that alacrity and life with which I used to woo the rural muse of Scotia. Many a merry meeting this publication has given us, and possibly it may give us more—though, alas! I fear it. This protracting, slow-consuming illness which hangs over me, will, I doubt not, my ever dear friend arrest my sun before he has well nigh reached his middle career, and will turn over the poet to far other and more important concerns than studying the brilliancy of wit or the pathos of sentiment. However, hope is the cordial of the human heart, and I endeavour to cherish it as well as I can." His sun of life was descending to the setting.

The summer warmth wrought no change on his suffering frame: and he was advised, about the close of June, to go into the country. I believe Burns followed his own feelings rather than the counsel of his physician, when he took up his residence at a lonely place called The Brow, on the shore of Solway in Annandale, resolved to try the effects of bathing in the sea—a remedy recommended in almost all cases by our rustic doctors. It happened at that time that Mrs. Riddel was residing near The Brow: she was herself ailing. On hearing of the Poet's arrival, she invited him to dinner and sent her carriage for him to the cottage where he lodged, as he was unable to walk.

"I was struck," said she, "with his appearance on entering the room: the stamp of death was impressed on his features. His first words were, 'Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?' I replied, that it seemed a doubtful case which of us should be there soonest. He looked in my face with an air of great kindness, and expressed his concern at seeing me so ill with his usual sensibility. At table he ate little or nothing. We had a long conversation about his present state, and the approaching termination of all his earthly prospects. He spoke of his death with firmness as well as feeling, as an event likely to happen very soon, and which gave him concern chiefly from leaving his four

children so young and unprotected, and his wife in the hourly expectation of lying-in of a fifth. He showed great concern about the care of his literary fame, and particularly the publication of his posthumous works.—He said he was well aware that his death would occasion some noise, and that every scrap of his writing would be revived against him, to the injury of his future reputation; that letters and verses written with unguarded freedom would be handed about by vanity or malevolence, when no dread of his resentment would restrain them, or prevent malice or envy from pouring forth their venom on his name. The conversation was kept up with great evenness and animation on his side. I had seldom seen his mind greater, or more collected. There was frequently a considerable degree of vivacity in his sallies, and they would probably have had a greater share had not the concern and dejection I could not disguise damped the spirit of pleasantry he seemed willing to indulge. We parted about sun-set on the evening of the 5th of July; the next day I saw him again, and we parted to meet no more."

With how little advantage to his health he bathed in the Solway, may be gathered from his letter to Cunningham of the 7th of July.—"Alas! my friend, I fear the voice of the Bard will soon be heard among you no more. For these eight or ten months I have been ailing, sometimes bedfast and sometimes not; but these last three months I have been tortured with an excruciating rheumatism, which has reduced me to nearly the last stage.—You would actually not know me if you saw me. Pale, emaciated, and so feeble as occasionally to need help from my chair—my spirits fled—fled—but I can no more on this subject. I beg you to use your utmost interest, and that of all your friends, to move our Commissioners of Excise to grant me my full salary. If they do not grant it, I must lay my account with an exit truly *en poete*—if I die not of disease, I must perish with hunger." The Excise refused this last humble boon.

On the 10th of July, he thus writes to his brother Gilbert:—"It will be no very pleasing news to you to be told that I am dangerously ill, and not likely to get bet-

ter. An inveterate rheumatism has reduced me to such a state of debility, and my appetite is so totally gone, that I can scarcely stand on my legs. God keep my wife and children! If I am taken from their head, they will be poor indeed. Remember me to my mother." To his wife he writes,—"No flesh nor fish can I swallow; porridge and milk are the only things I can taste. I am very happy to hear by Miss Jessie Lewars that you are all well. My very best compliments to her, and to all the children. I will see you on Sunday. Your affectionate husband, ROBERT BURNS." He likewise wrote to James Armour of Mauchline, his father-in-law, saying, that his dear wife was near her confinement; that his own days were numbered, for he felt himself dying and requesting that Mrs. Armour might hasten to Dumfries, to speak and look comfort to them.

Burns had formerly, when his hopes were higher and his health good, made it almost a quarrel with Thomson that he had sent him five pounds in acknowledgment of his songs. His situation, in all respects, was changed now: he had to bend his proud heart to beg from the Excise the continuance of his pay; and he had to lay himself under obligations to Stobie, who generously performed his duties gratis. He had no money in his pocket, and scarcely any food in his house; and, to aggravate these evils, one Williamson, to whom he owed the price of the cloth of his volunteer regimentals, threatened to sue him for the amount. The Poet was alarmed at this; and on the 12th of July wrote to Thomson, saying, "After all my boasted independence, curst necessity compels me to implore you for five pounds. A cruel haberdasher, to whom I owe an account, taking it into his head that I am dying, has commenced a process, and will infallibly put me in gaol. Do, for God's sake, send me that sum, and that by return of post. Forgive me this earnestness; but the horror's of a gaol have made me half-distracted."—To render this very modest request more acceptable, the Poet, ill as he was, tried his hand on the air of "Rothemurche;" and, allowing his mind to wander to scenes of former happiness, and to one whom he had loved, composed the last song he was to measure in this world, begin-

ning "Fairest Maid on Devon banks." It is written in a character indicating the feeble state of his bodily strength.

Thomson instantly complied with the request of Burns: he borrowed a five pound note from Cunningham, and sent it, saying he had made up his mind to enclose the identical sum the Poet had asked for when he received his letter. For this he has been sharply censured; and his defence is, that he was afraid of offending the pride of the Poet, who was uncommonly sensitive in pecuniary matters. A better defence is Thomson's own poverty; only one volume of his splendid work was then published; his outlay had been beyond his means, and very small sums of money had come in to cover his large expenditure. Had he been richer, his defence would have been a difficult matter. When Burns made the stipulation, his hopes were high, and the dread of hunger, or the gaol, was far from his thoughts: he imagined that it became genius to refuse money in a work of national importance. But his situation grew gloomier as he wrote; he had lost nearly his all in Ellisland, and was obliged to borrow small sums, which he found a difficulty in repaying.—That he was in poor circumstances was well known to the world; and had money been at Thomson's disposal, a way might have been found of doing the Poet good by stealth: he sent five pounds, because he could not send ten; and it would have saved him from some sarcastic remarks, and some pangs of heart, had he said so at once.

On the same day that Burns wrote to Thomson he also wrote to Mrs. Dunlop, and to his cousin, James Burness of Montrose. To the latter he said, "A rascal of a haberdasher believes that I am dying, and will infallibly put my emaciated body in gaol. Will you be so good as accommodate me, and that by return of post, with ten pounds? O, James, did you know the pride of my heart, you would feel double for me. Alas! I am not used to beg. O, do not disappoint me—save me from the horrors of a gaol." To Mrs. Dunlop he said, "I have written to you so often without receiving any answer, that I would not trouble you again but for the circumstances in which I am. An illness which has long hung about me, in all probability will speedily send me beyond that 'bourne

whence no traveller returns.' Your friendship, with which for many years you honored me, was a friendship dearest to my soul; your conversation, and especially your correspondence, were at once highly entertaining and instructive. With what pleasure did I use to break up the seal! The remembrance yet adds one pulse more to my poor palpitating heart. Farewell."

These are supposed, by some, to be the last words which he wrote: there are yet later, and of higher import and meaning. As the day of life darkened down, Burns began to prepare for the change: he remembered that he had written many matters, both in verse and prose, of a nature licentious as well as witty. He sought to reclaim them, and in some instances succeeded; he had, when his increasing difficulties were rumored about, received an offer for them from a bookseller; but he spurned at fifty pounds in comparison of his fair fame, and refused to sell or sanction them. That such things were scattered abroad troubled him greatly; he reflected that the mean and the malignant might rake them together; and, quoting them against him, triumph o'er his fame, and trample on his dust. Perhaps he felt some consolation in believing that his other works transcended these so far in talent and in number, that the grosser would be weighed down, cast aside, and forgotten. What troubled him most was the imputations of disloyalty to his country which has been thrown upon his character: he trembled lest he should be represented as one who desired to purchase republican license at the price of foreign invasion. He had defended his character and motives in a letter, uncommonly manly and eloquent, to Erskine of Mar; but he had requested it to be burnt, and was not aware that it was fortunately preserved. He still retained the letter on his memory, and it was the last act of his pen to write it out fair, and with comments, into his memorandum-book. Burns thus gave his deliberate—I might say dying sanction, to that important letter; it makes statements which cover the Board of Excise and the British government of that day with eternal shame, and contains sentiments honorable to the head and heart of the Poet—such as should live in the bosom of every Briton.

"You have been misinformed," says the Poet, "as to my final dismission from the Excise—I am still in the service. Indeed, but for the exertions of Mr. Grahame of Fintray, who has ever been my warm and generous friend, I had, without so much as a hearing, or the slightest previous intimation, been turned adrift, with my helpless family, to all the horrors of want. In my defence to their accusations, I said, that whatever might be my sentiments of republics, ancient or modern, as to Britain, I abjured the idea; that a constitution, which, in its original principles, experience had proved to be every way fitted for our happiness in society, it would be insanity to sacrifice to an untried visionary theory;—that, in consideration of my being situated in a department, however humble, immediately in the hands of people in power, I had forborne in taking an active part, either personally or as an author, in the present business of reform; but that, where I must declare my sentiments, I would say there existed a system of corruption between the executive power and the representative part of the legislature which boded no good to our glorious constitution, and which every patriotic Briton must wish to see amended. My last remark gave great offence, and Mr. Corbet was instructed to inquire on the spot, and to document me—'That my business was to act, *not to think*.'" A nobleman connected with the Pitt administration, to whom I repeated these last words, smiled bitterly and said—"They are as absurd as they are cruel."

Having removed the veil of mystery which hung too long over this transaction, and established himself as a lover of his country, with all who know what patriotism is, Burns proceeds to discuss his hopes of fame, and his character as a man and a Poet.—"The partiality of my countrymen," he observes, "has brought me forward as a man of genius, and has given me a character to support. In the Poet I have avowed manly and independent sentiments which, I trust, will be found in the man. My honest fame is my dearest concern, and a thousand times I have trembled at the idea of those degrading epithets that malice or misrepresentation may affix to my name. I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some

future hackney scribbler, with the heavy malice of stupidity exulting in his hireling paragraphs. 'Burns, notwithstanding the fanfaronade of independence to be found in his works, and after having been held forth to public view and to public estimation as a man of some genius, yet, quite destitute of resources within himself to support his borrowed dignity, dwindled into a paltry exciseman, and slunk out the rest of his insignificant existence in the meanest of pursuits, and among the vilest of mankind.'—In your hands, sir, permit me to lodge my disavowal and defiance of the slanderous falsehood. Burns was a poor man by birth, and an exciseman by necessity; but I *will* say it—the sterling of his honest worth no poverty could debase, and his independent British mind oppression might bend, but could not subdue." These sentiments need no comment: in them we hear the voice of the Poet speaking from the grave, desiring justice rather than mercy.

Sea-bathing relieved for awhile the pains in the Poet's limbs; but his appetite failed; he was oppressed with melancholy; he looked ruefully forward, and saw misery and ruin ready to swallow his helpless household up.—Burns grew feverish on the 14th of July; felt himself sinking, and longed to be at home. He returned on the 18th, in a small spring cart; the ascent to his house was steep, and the cart stopped at the foot of the Mill-hole-brae; when he alighted he shook much and stood with difficulty; he seemed unable to stand upright. He stooped, as if in pain, and walked tottering towards his own door: his looks were hollow and ghastly, and those who saw him then never expected to see him in life again.

It was soon spread through Dumfries that Burns had returned from The Brow much worse than when he went away, and it was added that he was dying. The anxiety of the people, high and low, was very great. I was present and saw it. Wherever two or three were together their talk was of Burns, and of him alone. They spoke of his history, of his person, and of his works—of his witty sayings and sarcastic replies, and of his too early fate, with much enthusiasm, and sometimes with deep feeling. All that he had done, and all that they

had hoped he would accomplish, were talked of: half-a-dozen of them stopped Dr. Maxwell in the street, and said, "How is Burns, sir?" He shook his head, saying, "he cannot be worse," and passed on to be subjected to similar inquiries farther up the way. I heard one of a groupe inquire with much simplicity, "Who do you think will be our poet now?"

Though Burns now knew he was dying, his good humor was unruffled, and his wit never forsook him.—When he looked up and saw Dr. Maxwell at his bedside,—"Alas!" he said, "what has brought you here? I am but a poor crow, and not worth plucking." He pointed to his pistols, took them in his hand, and gave them to Maxwell, saying they could not be in worthier keeping, and he should never more have need of them. This relieved his proud heart from a sense of obligation. Soon afterwards he saw Gibson, one of his brother-volunteers, by the bed-side with tears in his eyes. He smiled and said,—"John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me."

His little household presented a melancholy spectacle: the Poet dying; his wife in hourly expectation of being confined; four helpless children wandering from room to room, gazing on their miserable parents, and little of food or cordial kind to pacify the whole or soothe the sick. To Jessie Lewars, all who are charmed with the Poet's works are much indebted: she acted with the prudence of a sister and the tenderness of a daughter, and kept desolation away, though she could not keep disease.—"A tremor," says Maxwell, "pervaded his frame; his tongue, though often refreshed, became parched; and his mind, when not roused by conversation, sunk into delirium. On the second and third day after his return from The Brow, the fever increased and his strength diminished. On the fourth day, when his attendant held a cordial to his lips, he swallowed it eagerly—rose almost wholly up—spread out his hands—sprang forward nigh the whole length of the bed—fell on his face and expired. He was thirty-seven years and seven months old, and of a form and strength which promised long life; but the great and inspired are often cut down in youth, while

"Villains ripen gray with time."

His interment took place on the 25th of July; nor should it be forgotten, in relating the Poet's melancholy story, that, while his body was borne along the street, his widow was taken in labor and delivered of a son, who survived his birth but a short while. The leading men of the town and neighbourhood appeared as mourners; the streets were lined by the Angushire Fencibles and the Cinque Ports Cavalry, and his body was borne by the Volunteers to the old kirk-yard, with military honors. The multitude who followed amounted to many thousands. It was an impressive and a mournful sight; all was orderly and decorous. The measured steps, the military array, the colors displayed, and the muffled drum —I thought then, and think now—had no connexion with a Pastoral Bard. I mingled with the mourners. On reaching the grave into which the Poet's body was about to descend, there was a pause among them, as if loth to part with his remains; and when the first shovel-full of earth sounded on the coffin-lid, I looked up, and saw tears on many cheeks where tears were not usual. The Volunteers justified the surmise of Burns by three ragged and straggling vollies: the earth was heaped up, and the vast multitude melted silently away.

The body of Burns was not, however, to remain long in its place. To suit the plan of a rather showy mausoleum, his remains were removed into a more commodious spot of the same kirk-yard, on the 5th of June, 1815. The coffin was partly dissolved away; but the dark curling locks of the Poet were as glossy, and seemed as fresh, as on the day of his death. In the interior of the structure stands a marble monument, embodying, with little skill or grace, that well-known passage in the dedication to the gentlemen of the Caledonian hunt:—"The poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the plough; and threw her inspiring mantle over me."—Nor is the indifferent sculpture redeemed by the inscription. The merits of him who wrote "Tam O' Shanter," and "The Cotter's Saturday Night," are concealed in Latin. Here, as to a shrine, flock annually vast numbers of pilgrims; many, very

many, are from America; not a few from France and Germany; and the list-book contains the names of the most eminent men of England, Scotland, and Ireland.

Thus lived and died Robert Burns, the chief of Scottish Poets. He seems to have been created to show how little classic lore is required for the happiest flights of the muse—how dangerous to domestic peace burning passions and touchy sensibilities are—and how divinely a man may be inspired, without gaining bread or acquiring importance, in the land his genius adorns.

Burns, in his youth, was tall and sinewy, with coarse swarthy features, and a ready word of wit or of kindness for all. The man differed little from the lad; his form was vigorous, his limbs shapely, his knees firmly knit, his arms muscular and round, his hands large, his fingers long, and he stood five feet ten inches high. All his movements were unconstrained and free:—he had a slight stoop of the neck, betokening a holder of the plough; and a lock or so of his dark waving hair was tied carelessly behind with two casts of narrow black ribbon. His looks beamed with genius and intelligence; his forehead was broad and clear, shaded by raven locks inclining to curl; his cheeks were furrowed more with anxiety than time; his nose was short rather than long; his mouth, firm and manly; his teeth, white and regular; and there was a dimple, a small one, on his chin. His eyes were large, dark, and lustrous; I have heard them likened to coach-lamps approaching in a dark night, because they were first seen of any part of the Poet.—"I never saw," said Scott, "such another eye in a human head, though I have seen the most distinguished men of my time." In his ordinary moods, Burns looked a man of a hundred; but when animated in company, he was a man of a million; his swarthy features glowed; his eyes kindled up till they all but lightened; his ploughman stoop vanished; and his voice—deep, manly, and musical—added its sorcery of pathos or of wit, till the dullest owned the enchantments of genius.

His personal strength was united to great activity; he could move a twenty-stone sack of meal without much apparent effort, and load a cart with bags of corn in the

time, one of his neighbours said, that other men were talking about it. A mason was hewing him a stone for a cheese-press, and Burns took pleasure as a side was squared to turn over the huge mass unaided. A large pebble is still pointed out at Ellisland, as his putting-stone; and though no living man in Nithsdale perhaps can poise it in the air, the tradition proves the popular belief in his great strength. He delighted in feats of rural activity and skill; he loved to draw the straightest furrow on his fields, to sow the largest quantity of seed-corn of any farmer in the dale in a day, mow the most rye-grass and clover in ten hours of exertion, and stook to the greatest number of reapers. In this he sometimes met with his match. After a hard strife, on the harvest field, with a fellow-husbandman, in which the Poet was equalled:—"Robert," said his rival, "I'm no sae far behind this time, I'm thinking?"—"John," said he in a whisper, "you're behind in something yet—I made a sang while I was stooking!"—I have heard my father say that Burns had the handsomest cast of the hand in sowing corn he ever saw on a furrowed field.

Burns desired as much to excel in conversation as he did in these fits and starts of husbandry; but he was more disposed to contend for victory than to seek for knowledge. The debating club of Tarbolton was ever strong within him; a fierce lampoon or a rough epigram was often the reward of those who ventured to contradict him. His conversation partook of the nature of controversy, and he urged his opinions with a vehemence amounting to fierceness. All this was natural enough when he was involved in argument with the boors around him; but he was disposed, when pressed in debate, to be equally discourteous and unsparing to the polite and the titled.

In the company of men of talent he was another man; he was then among his peers, and listened with attention, and spoke with a modest eloquence which surprised many.—"I think Burns," said Robertson the historian to Professor Christieson, "was one of the most extraordinary men I ever met with; his poetry surprised me very much, his prose surprised me still more, and his

conversation surprised me more than both his poetry and prose."—"His address," says Robert Riddell, "was pleasing; he was neither forward nor embarrassed in manner; his spirits were generally high, and his conversation animated. His language was fluent, frequently fine; his enunciation always rapid; his ideas clear and vigorous, and he had the rare power of modulating his peculiarly fine voice, so as to harmonize with whatever subject he touched upon. I have heard him talk with astonishing rapidity, nor miss the articulation of a single syllable: elevate and depress his voice as the topic seemed to require; and sometimes, when the subject was pathetic, he would prolong the words in the most impressive and affecting manner, indicative of the deep sensibility which inspired him. He often lamented to me that fortune had not placed him at the bar or in the senate; he had great ambition, and the feeling that he could not gratify it preyed upon him severely."

In the morning of life, Burns met lords with awe and embarrassment; in the afternoon of existence, he encountered them with suspicion or scorn. Those who named a lord, or alluded to a person of rank in his company, were instantly crushed in an epigram, or insulted by some sarcastic sally. The conduct of the Scottish aristocracy had sunk to his heart, and the neglect of the Pitt administration was seldom away from his fancy. The more he saw of the world, and the more he reflected, these unwelcome thoughts pressed the more upon him. He could not but know that the high-born and the well-connected prospered: that thousands less worthy than himself were fattening on posts and pensions, and elbowing the sons of genius out of what he reckoned their patrimony; he had also been made to feel his dependence, in that insulting mandate from the Board of Excise, that his duty was "to act, and not to think." It is true that his dislike might have been expressed with more courtesy, and his wit might have had less ferocity, with equal keenness of point. Yet, when he proposed to drink the health of Washington instead of Pitt, it was less a matter of ill-breeding, or republican feeling, than a burst of anger: he considered the Premier as one of his op-

pressors—and perhaps the want of courtesy belonged to him who invited the Poet to dinner, and greeted him with this unwelcome toast.

In the company of ladies, Burns was quite another being: for them he calmed down his impetuous temper, and allowed all that was winning in his nature to shine out. He was fierce as Moloch among men; among women he was a Belial, soft, insinuating and eloquent: his eyes, which before sparkled like those of the serpent, became meek like those of the dove: the love of contradiction died within him, and he courted his way to their hearts and their understandings at the same time. In this his letters differ widely from his conversation: the presence of beauty inspired him; when it was no longer before him he seems to hunt for thoughts and hesitate for words, and, amid much natural emotion, is affected and cumbrous. Nothing more untrue was ever uttered than that his female patronesses shrunk from the vehement familiarity of his admiration; there is no proof to be found of this: Margaret Chalmers, indeed, scrupled to have a song published in her praise: and Miss Alexander chose to resent by her silence the song of the "Lass of Ballochmyle;" but there is no instance of ladies shrinking from the audacity of his admiration. His most constant correspondents were ladies of birth and talent; the ladies of the north, much to their honor, sympathized with their Poet to his last; and the day after he was buried some of the proudest dames of Dumfrieshire shed tears as they scattered flowers over his grave. In truth, he did not express the rapture of an enamoured peasant, as Jeffrey assures us he did, but the admiration of a man: he preferred the good-breeding of nature to the iced civilities of polished life; he did not, indeed, think that woman was to be worshipped according to the fantastic rules of chivalry; but when she spoke, he listened; when she sang, he seemed to become intoxicated with the sound; and when she played on an instrument, he neither heard nor saw ought else save herself and her music.

To the opinions of the world Burns paid too little deference; whatever he felt he said, and what he said often glanced sharply on religion and on politics. He attacked

the fiery zeal of sundry church-men—it was called an attack on religion; he attacked the pride and presumption of the titled—it was called envy and arrogance: he wished for more wealth among the poor, and more humility among the rich—and was branded as a disturber of the public peace; and he desired to see the principles of the revolution of 1688 carried into effect with less corruption in the high places—and was called a jacobin, and ordered to be silent.

What he was with the world at large, so was he with man in particular: he had no medium in his hatred or his love; he never spared the dull, as if they were not to be endured because he was himself bright; wealth he was inclined to visit as a fault on the possessor. When in the company of the demure and the pious, he loved to start doubts in religion, which he knew nothing short of inspiration could solve; and to speak of Calvinism with such latitude of language as shocked or vexed all listeners, and caused him to be regarded by some as a freethinker or a deist. In his own household he was another man: he was an affectionate husband and a dutiful father; he loved to teach his boys their duty to God and to their neighbour. To Mrs. Haugh—a most respectable woman—in whose house he lived in the Bank-Vennel, and who was much with him during his long illness—he lamented that he had sometimes doubted the truths of Scripture: he found them to be his consolation at last.

I have no wish to shut my eyes on the follies of the Poet; they have darkened other narratives than mine. The memoir of Heron, the criticism of Jeffrey, and the communications of Syme have gone widely abroad. With the first, Burns is a coarse libertine; with the second, a careless drunkard, who starved his wife and children; while the third describes him as rough and fierce, and inclined to stab the friend who hazarded good advice. Of the feelings of Heron, it is sufficient to say that he penned his depreciating memoir to meet the subscription for the Poet's widow and children: of the opinion of Jeffrey, I may safely assert that he has judged amiss; and with regard to the account of Syme, I can only imagine that it originated in some mistake on the part of him of Ryedale:

—to suppose Burns serious, contradicts all the rest of his life. Of Heron, the Poet must have thought when he said,—"I have often, in blasting anticipation, listened to some future hackney scribbler with the heavy malice of savage stupidity exulting in his hireling paragraphs."

Burns was no tippler; he loved the excitement of company, and to see the bottle circulate; to others as well as to him,

"Every new cork was a new spring of joy."

Nor did he know always when to retire from these social excesses; good fellowship was as a spell upon him. His own heart, always too open, was then laid bare. He watched the characters of men; he gladdened the clever by the sallies of his fancy, stimulated the dull by his wit, and imagined that he was strengthening the ties of friendship, and that

"The bands grew the tighter the more they were wet."

No doubt, later in life he desired to escape from uneasy reflections—from thinking of ruined hopes and humbled ambition, and, seeking consolation in company, took an angel of darkness to his heart rather than one of light. I am assured by Mrs. Haugh, who knew him well to the last, that Burns drank from circumstances rather than inclination. An angel from heaven, she said, could scarcely have escaped corruption in his situation; he was constantly invited, nay, sometimes almost literally dragged into company. Her husband now and then, as he went out by day-light in the morning to his work, met Burns coming home. The Poet never passed him without a word or two, expressing his sorrow for the life he was leading—such as, "O, Mr. Haugh, you are a happy man; you have risen from a refreshing sleep, and left a kind wife and children, while I am returning a poor self-condemned wretch to mine." At whatever hour he came home, or in whatever condition he returned, he always spoke kindly to his wife; reproachful words were never heard between them. He was a stedfast friend and a good neighbour, ready with his hands and willing to oblige: while he lived in Ellisland, few passed his door without being cheered by his wit or treated at his table.

Of women and their fascinations he loved to talk freely and widely; the witchery of his conversation, and the magic of his songs, were too powerful for the resolution of some; but his errors in this way have been seriously exaggerated. Those who were unacquainted with the freedoms of the muse beheld him making love in every song he wrote; and young spinsters

"Coost their heads fu' hiegh."

when they saw their charms reflected in the bright verses of the Bard, and suspected their own fortitude. Some were less timid: one intrepid young lady said she desired the Poet's acquaintance of all things, and intimated the the time and place were he might meet her. He took a way which did not always succeed of scaring such impertinents—"It is scarcely modest in a fine young woman," was his reply, "to seek the acquaintance of one whose character is considered so bad." To a lively landlady in Dumfries, whose ale-firkins were to be examined, he said,—"Who will go down to the cellar with me till I gauge the browst?"—"I'll go down with you myself, Mr. Burns," she replied. He turned round on her, and with a peculiar glance, said,—"O, woman, strong is thy faith!" Stories of this complexion, oftener for than against him, might be multiplied:—

"Between two maids, who hath the merriest eye
He had, indeed, no shallow spirit of judgment."

The political heresies of the Poet are more easily dealt with. He knew that he was created with high powers of mind; he was conscious not only of his superiority to the peasants around but to men of high title and of long descent, and felt himself defrauded of the station nature intended him to fill in society:—this is visible in almost all he writes. He can justify the ways of God to man, but he cannot justify the ways of man to God; he feels that heaven makes nothing hereditary—neither beauty, taste, nor talent; and he is grieved to see men insult the great laws of nature, and form institutions contradicting God's divine system. This is the sentiment which inspires that noble lyric, "A man's a man for a' that;" and it was this feeling which made him sad and

desponding—which induced him to seek consolation in the shadowy images of republics and hail with so much rapture the dawn of a liberty which promised the empire of the earth to the worth and the genius which it produced. That Pitt did not feel truly, or weigh worthily, the genius and sentiments of the "meteor of the north," as the Poet was idly called, seems perfectly clear. When reminded of his claims by Henry Addington, he pushed the bottle to Lord Melville, and did nothing; his own days were shortened by disappointed hopes and crushed ambition. Had a situation worthy of the genius of Burns been bestowed on him, this tale had neither been so dark nor so sorrowful—he would not have perished like a caged eagle, denied the full use of its wings and the free range of its cloud-capt mountains.

Of his modes of study and habits of life much has already been said; something more can be added. He has told us how he delighted in the rushing of the storm through the leafless woods; how he rejoiced in the outgushing of the flowers in spring, in the song of the birds, and the melody of running waters. In stormy nights he has been known to rise from good company and a well-furnished table, to gaze on the tumultuous clouds, mark the vivid lightnings, and hearken to the pealing thunder. He loved, while in his farm, to stand on the scaur, and, when Nith was in flood, look at the red torrent bursting from the Bankhead-wood against Dalswinton holm, and, flung back again by the bridling embankment, flashing and foaming from side to side, making the ashes and alders of the bank quiver and quake. His favorite spot of study lies between Ellisland onstead and the Isle—where the uplands descend by the water-side to the holm. Here the neighbouring gentry love to walk, and peasants to assemble: the Poet's widow and several ladies from the west of Scotland lately dined on the place—as sacred to the memory of his musings.

When he lived in Dumfries he had three favorite walks—on the dock-green by the river side—among the ruins of Lincluden College,—and towards the Martingdon-Ford on the north side of the Nith. This latter place was secluded, commanded a view of the distant hills and the

romantic towers of Lincluden, and afforded soft greensward banks to rest upon, and the sight and sound of the stream :—here he composed many of his finest songs.—As soon as he was heard to hum to himself his wife saw that he had something in his mind, and was quite prepared to see him snatch up his hat and set silently off for his musing ground. When by himself and in the open air, his ideas arranged themselves in their natural order, words came at will, and he seldom returned without having finished a song. In case of interruption, he set about completing it at the fire-side; he balanced himself on the hind-legs of his arm-chair, and rocking to and fro continued to hum the tune and seldom failed of success.—When the verses were finished, he passed them through the ordeal of Mrs. Burns' voice; listened attentively while she sung, asked her if any of the words were difficult, and when one happened to be too rough he readily found a smoother—but he never, save at the resolute entreaty of a scientific musician, sacrificed sense to sound. The autumn was his favorite season, and the twilight his favorite hour of study.

As a farmer and an exciseman he did his duty, and he did little more. He was laborious by fits, and attentive by starts; he tilled the ground and protected the revenue, but he wrought without hope in the one, and without heart in the other. He endeavoured to make his farm yield the rent by butter and by cheese, as well as by corn; and as this required female hands, he confided it mostly to the management of his wife and maid-servants. But Ellisland is naturally fitter for corn than for grass; the greensward was far from so luxuriant as that of the milk and butter districts of Cunningham and Kyle; nor was his wife sufficiently intimate with the management of cows and the guidance of a dairy. The plan of Burns to unite, in his own person, the poet, the exciseman, and the farmer was poetic, and failed as much from miscalculation as mismanagement. His duties in the excise he performed with strict punctuality; he was afraid of being reckoned negligent, and was always at his post. He kept his books in excellent order.—"Bring me Burns's books," said Maxwell of Terraughty, a rigid and determined ma-

gistrate; it always does me good to see them—they show me that a warm kind-hearted man may be a diligent and honest officer." He was not a bustling active guager, nor did he love to put himself foremost in adventures which he knew would end in distress to many. One clear moonlight morning, on being awakened by the clang of horses at the gallop, he started up, looked out at the window, and to his wife, who asked eagerly what it was, he whispered, "It is smugglers, Jean."—"Robert, then I fear ye'll be to follow them?" she said—"And so I would," he answered, "were it Will Gunnion or Edgar Wright; but it's poor Brandyburn, who has a wife and three weans, and is no doing owre weel in his farm.—What can I do?" She pulled him from the window.—Many anecdotes of this kind might be told.

Of his quick wit and caustic keenness of remark I have already given instances: more are in circulation both in prose and verse. It is much, however, to be regretted that his sallies, where sentiment unites with gaiety, have frequently escaped, as matters too light and elusive, from the public mind; while sayings and retorts—sharp, personal, or profane—have remained. I shall relate a few, that nothing on which his spirit is impressed may be lost. He disliked puns, and was seldom civil to those who uttered them.—"After all, a pun is an innocent thing," said one of his companions. "Innocent?" said Burns; "no, sir; it is committing 'a deed without a name' with the language." He disliked to hear great people talked about more than they deserved. One who was in his company kept saying the Earl of such a place said this, and Duke so-and-so said that.—"Have done, sir!" exclaimed the Poet; "you are stopping our mouths by a royal proclamation." He loved praise—and loved it not the less when it came from the lips of an accomplished lady.—"Madam," said he to Mrs. M'Murdo, "your praise has ballooned me up Parnassus."—"My merit is not all my own," he said to Robert Aiken of Ayr, "for you have read me into reputation." He called once on a certain lord in Edinburgh, and was shown into the library. To amuse himself till his lordship was at leisure, he took down a volume of Shakspeare splendidly bound, and on

opening it discovered, from the gilding, that it had never been read; also, that the worms were eating it through and through. Some dozen years afterwards, another visitor took down the same volume, and found the following lines pencilled by Burns on the first page :—

"Through and through the inspired leaves
Ye maggots make your windings;
But, oh! respect his lordship's taste,
And spare his golden bindings."

Burns paid little deference to the artificial distinctions of society. On his way to Leith one morning, he met a man in hoddin-gray—a west-country farmer; he shook him earnestly by the hand, and stopt and conversed with him. All this was seen by a young Edinburgh blood, who took the poet roundly to task for this defect of taste. —"Why, you fantastic gomeral," said Burns, "it was not the gray coat, the scone-bonnet, and the Sanquhar boot-hose I spoke to, but the man that was in them; and the man, sir, for true worth, would weigh you and me, and ten more such, down any day." His discernment was great: when Scott was quite a lad he caught the notice of the Poet, by naming the author of some verses describing a soldier lying dead on the snow. Burns regarded the future minstrel with sparkling eyes, and said, "Young man, you have begun to consider these things early."— He paused on seeing Scott's flushing face—shook him by the hand, saying in a deep tone, "This boy will be heard of yet."

Speaking one day of his own poetry, Burns said, "I have much to answer for: my success in rhyme has produced a shoal of ill-spawned monsters who imagine, because they make words clink, they are poets. It requires a will-o'-wisp to pass over the quick sandsand quagmires of the Scottish dialect. I am spunkie—they follow me, and sink." To one who was frugal of his wine at table, and who was standing holding up a fresh bottle, saying, "Do allow me to draw this one cork more; I ask it as a favor."—"Sir," said Burns, "you hold the screw over the cork like Abraham holding the knife above his son Isaac—make the sacrifice!" On hearing a gentleman sneering at the Solemn League and Covenant, and call-

ing it ridiculous or fanatical, the Poet eyed him across the table, and exclaimed,

> "The solemn League and Covenant
> Cost Scotland blood—cost Scotland tears—
> But it sealed Freedom's sacred cause;
> If thou'rt a slave, indulge thy sneers."

Of the farm of Ellisland, when some one said it was good ground, Burns answered, "And so it is, save what is stones. It is not land, sir; it is the riddlings of the creation!" While at Moffat once with Clarke the composer, the Poet called for a bumper of brandy.—"Oh, not a bumper," said the musician—"I prefer two small glasses."—"Two glasses?" cried Burns, "why you are like the lass in Kyle, who said she would rather be kissed twice bareheaded than once with her bonnet on." At the table of Maxwell of Terraughty, when one of the guests chose to talk of the dukes and earls with whom he had drank or dined, Burns silenced him with an epigram:—

> "What of earls with whom you have supt,
> And of dukes that you dined with yestreen?
> Lord! a louse, sir, is still but a louse,
> Though it crawl on the curls of a queen."

On one occasion, being storm-stayed at Lamington in Clydesdale, he went to church, but was so little pleased with the preacher and the place, that he left a poetic record on the church-window against them:—

> "As cauld a wind as ever blew,
> A caulder kirk, and in't but few;
> As cauld a minister's e'er spak,
> Ye'se a' be het ere I come back."

"I dined with Burns," said Mrs. Montagu, "at Arbigland: he was witty; drank as others drank; and was long in coming to the tea-table. It was then the fashion for young ladies to be busy about something—I was working a flower. The Poet sat down beside me, talked of the beauty of what I was imitating, and put his hand so near the work, that I said, "Well, take it, and do a bit yourself."—"O, ho!" said he, "you think my hand is unsteady with wine. I cannot work a flower, madam; but—" he pulled the thread out of the needle,

and re-threaded it in a moment—"can a tipsy man do that?" He talked to me of his children, more particularly of his eldest son, and called him a promising boy—"And yet, madam," he said, with a sarcastic glance of his eye, "I hope he will turn out a glorious blockhead, and so make his fortune." Burns assumed, as well as he might, the title of Poet: he was none of those who insult the taste of their admirers by depreciating the merit of their own works: on one of his books in my possession, there is written, in his own rough, free, manly hand, "Robert Burns, Poet;" an imitation of this is added to the admirable portrait. On the collar of a favorite dog he had the same words engraven.

As a poet, Burns stands in the first rank: his conceptions are original; his thoughts new and weighty; his manner unborrowed; and even his language is his own. He owes no honor to his subjects, for they are all of an ordinary kind, such as humble life around him presented: he sought neither in high station nor in history for matter to his muse, and yet all his topics are simple, natural, and to be found without research. The Scottish bards who preceded him selected subjects which obtained notice from their oddity, and treated them in a way singular and outré. The verses of the first and fifth James, as well as those of Ramsay and Fergusson, are chiefly a succession of odd and ludicrous pictures, as true as truth itself, and no more. To their graphic force of delineation Burns added sentiment and passion, and an elegant tenderness and simplicity. He took topics familiar to all; the Daisy grew on the lands he ploughed; the Mouse built her nest on his own "stubble-field;" the Haggis smoked on his own board; the Scotch Drink which he sung was distilled on the banks of Doon; the Dogs that conversed so wittily and wisely were his own collies; Tam O'Shanter was a merry husbandman of his own acquaintance; and even the "De'il himsel" was familiar to all, and had often alarmed, by his eldritch croon and the marks of his cloven foot, the pastoral people of Kyle. Burns was the first who taught the world that in lowly subjects high poetry resided. Touched by him they were lifted at once into

the regions of inspiration. His spirit ascended into an humble topic, as the sap of spring ascends a tree to endow it with beauty and fragrance.

Burns is our chief national Poet; he owes nothing of the structure of his verse or of the materials of his poetry to other lands—he is the offspring of the soil; he is as natural to Scotland as the heath is to her hills, and all his brightness, like our nocturnal aurora, is of the north. Nor has he taken up fleeting themes; his song is not of the external manners and changeable affectations of man—it is of the human heart—of the mind's hopes and fears, and of the soul's aspirations. Others give us the outward form and pressure of society—the court-costume of human nature—the laced lapelle and the epauletted shoulder. He gives us flesh and blood; all he has he holds in common with mankind, yet all is national and Scottish. We can see to whom other bards have looked up for inspiration—like fruit of the finest sort, they smack of the stock on which they were grafted. Burns read Young, Thomson, Shenstone, and Shakspeare; yet there is nothing of Young, Thomson, Shenstone, or Shakspeare about him; nor is there much of the old ballad. His light is of nature, like sunshine, and not reflected. When, in after-life, he tried imitation, his "Epistle to Grahame of Fintray" showed satiric power and polish little inferior to Dryden.

He is not only the truest and best of Scottish Poets, but, in ease, fire, and passion he is second to none save Shakspeare. I know of no one besides, whose verse flows forth so sparkling and spontaneous. On the lines of other bards, we see the marks of care and study—now and then they are happy, but they are as often elaborated out and brightened like a key by frequent handling. Burns is seldom or never so—he wrote from the impulse of nature—he wrote because his passions raged like so many demons till they got vent in rhyme. Others sit and solicit the muse, like a coy mistress, to be kind; she came to Burns "unsent for," like the "bonnie lass" in the song, and showered her favors freely. The strength was equal to the harmony; rugged westlin words were taken from the lips of the weaver and the ploughman,

and adorned with melody and feeling; and familiar phrases were picked up from shepherds and mechanics, and rendered as musical as is Apollo's lute.—"I can think of no verse since Shakspeare's," said Pitt to Henry Addington, "which comes so sweetly and at once from nature. 'Out of the eater came forth meat:'"—the Premier praised whom he starved. Burns was not a poet by fits and starts: the mercury of his genius stood always at the inspired point; like the fairy's drinking-cup, the fountain of his fancy was ever flowing and ever full. He had, it is true, set times and seasons when the fruits of his mind were more than usually abundant; but the songs of spring were equal to those of summer—those of summer were not surpassed by those of autumn; the quantity might be different, the flavor and richness were ever the same.

His variety is equal to his originality. His humor, his gaiety, his tenderness, and his pathos come all in a breath; they come freely, for they come of their own accord; nor are they huddled together at random, like doves and crows in a flock; the contrast is never offensive: the comic slides easily into the serious, the serious into the tender, and the tender into the pathetic. The witch's cup, out of which the wondering rustic drank seven kinds of wine at once, was typical of the muse of Burns. It is this which has made him welcome to all readers.—"No poet," says Scott, "with the exception of Shakspeare, ever possessed the power of exciting the most varied and discordant emotions with such rapid transitions."

Notwithstanding the uncommon ease and natural elegance of his musings—the sweet and impassioned tone of his verse, critics have not been wanting who perceived in his works the humility of his origin. His poems, I remember well enough, were considered by many at first, as the labors of some gentleman who assumed the rustic for the sake of indulging in satire: their knowledge was reckoned beyond the reach, and their flights above the power, of a simple ploughman. Something of his belief may be seen in Mrs. Scott of Wauchope's letter; and when it was known for a truth that the author

was a ploughman, many lengthy discussions took place concerning the way in which the Poet had acquired his knowledge. Ayr race-course was pointed out as the likely scene of his studies of high life, where he found what was graceful and elegant. When Jeffrey wrote his depreciating criticism, he forgot that Burns had studied politeness in the very school where he himself was polished:—

"I've been at drunken writers' feasts,"

claims scholarship which the critic might have respected. If sharp epigrams, familiar gallantry, love of independence, and a leaning to the tumid be, as that critic assures us, true symptoms of vulgar birth, then Swift was a scavenger, Rochester a coalheaver, Pope a carman, and Thomson a boor. He might as well see lowness of origin in the James Stuart who wrote "Christ's Kirk on the green," as in the Robert Burns who wrote "Tam O' Shanter." The nature which Burns infused into all he wrote deals with internal emotions; feeling is no more vulgar in a ploughman than in a prince.

In all this I see the reluctance of an accomplished scholar to admit the merits of a rustic poet who not only claimed, but took, the best station on the Caledonian Parnassus. It could be no welcome sight to philosophers, historians, and critics to see a peasant, fragrant from the furrow, elbowing his way through their polished ranks to the highest place of honor, exclaiming,—

"What's a' your jargon o' your schools?"

Some of them were no doubt astonished and incensed; nature was doing too much: they avenged themselves by advising him to leave his vulgar or romantic fancies and grow classical. His best songs they called random flights; his happiest poems the fruit of a vagrant impulse; they accounted him an accident—"a wild colt of a comet"—a sort of splendid error; and refused to look upon him as a true poet, raised by the kindly warmth of nature; for they thought nothing beautiful which was not produced or adorned by learning.

Burns is a thorough Scotchman; his nationality, like cream on milk, floats on the surface of all his works; it

mingles in his humor as well as in his tenderness; yet it is seldom or never offensive to an English ear; there is nothing narrow-souled in it. He rejoices in Scotland's ancient glory and in her present strength; he bestows his affection on her heathery mountains, as well as on her romantic vales; he glories in the worth of her husbandmen, and in the loveliness of her maidens. The brackeny glens and thistly brae-sides of the North are more welcome to his sight than are the sunny dales of Italy, fragrant with ungathered grapes; its men, if not quite divinities, are more than mortal; and the women are clothed in beauty, and walk in a light of their own creating; a haggis is food fit for gods; brose is a better sort of ambrosia; "wi' twopenny we fear nae evil;" and whiskey not only makes us insensible of danger, but inspires noble verse and heroic deeds. There is something at once ludicrous and dignified in all this: to excite mingled emotions was the aim of the Poet. Besides a love of country, there is an intense love of freedom about him; not the savage joy in the boundless forest and the unlicensed range, but the calm determination and temperate delight of a reflecting mind. Burns is the bard of liberty—not that which sets fancy free and fetters the body; he resists oppression—he covets free thought and speech—he scorns slavish obedience to the mob as much as he detests tyranny in the rulers. He spoke out like a bold-inspired person; he knew his word would have weight with the world, and sung his "Man's a man for a' that," as a watch-word to future generations —as a spell against slavery.

The best poems of Burns are about rural and pastoral life, and relate the hopes, joys, and aspirations of that portion of the people falsely called the humble, as if grandeur of soul were a thing "born in the purple," and not the free gift and bounty of heaven. The passions and feelings of man are disguised, not changed, in polished society; flesh and blood are the same beneath hoddin' gray as beneath three-piled velvet. This was what Burns alluded to when he said he saw little in the splendid circles of Edinburgh which was new to him. His pictures of human life and of the world are of a men-

tal as well as national kind. His "Twa Dogs" prove that happiness is not unequally diffused: "Scotch Drink" gives us fire-side enjoyments; the "Earnest Cry and Prayer" shows the keen eye which humble people cast on their rulers; the "Address to the Deil" indulges in religious humanities, in which sympathy overcomes fear; "The Auld Mare," and "The Address to Mailie," enjoin, by the most simple and touching examples, kindness and mercy to dumb creatures; "The Holy Fair" desires to curb the licentiousness of those who seek amusement instead of holiness in religion; "Man was made to Mourn" exhorts the strong and the wealthy to be mindful of the weak and the poor; "Halloween" shows us superstition in a domestic aspect; "Tam O' Shanter" adorns popular belief with humorous terror, and helps us to laugh old dreads away; "The Mouse," in its weakness, contrasts with man in his strength, and preaches to us the instability of happiness on earth; while "The Mountain Daisy" pleads with such moral pathos the cause of the flowers of the field sent by God to adorn the earth for man's pleasure, that our feet have pressed less ungraciously on the "wee modest crimson-tipped flower," since his song was written.

Others of his poems have a still grander reach. "The Vision" reveals the Poet's plan of Providence, proves the worth of eloquence, bravery, honesty, and beauty, and that even the rustic bard himself is an useful and ornamental link in the great chain of being. "The Cotter's Saturday Night" connects us with the invisible world, and shows that domestic peace, faithful love, and patriotic feelings are of earthly things most akin to the joys of Heaven; while the divine "Elegy on Matthew Henderson" unites human nature in a bond of sympathy with the stars of the sky, the fowls of the air, the beasts of the field, the flowery vale, and the lonely mountain. The hastiest of his effusions has a wise aim; and the eloquent Curran perceived this when he spoke of the "sublime morality of Burns."

Had Burns, in his poems, preached only so many moral sermons, his audience might have been a select, but it would have been a limited one. The sublimest truths,

like the surest medicines, are sometimes uneasy to swallow: for this the Poet provided an effectual remedy; he associated his moral counsel with so much tenderness and pathos, and garnished it all about with such exquisite humor, that the public, like the giant drinking the wine in Homer, gaped, and cried, "More! this is divine!" If a reader has such a limited soul as to love humor only, why Burns is his man—he has more of it than any modern poet: should he covet tenderness, he cannot read far in Burns without finding it to his mind; should he desire pathos, the Scottish Peasant has it of the purest sort; and if he wish for them altogether let him try no other Bard —for in what other poet will he find them woven more naturally into the web of song? It is by thus suiting himself to so many minds and tastes, that Burns has become such a favorite with the world; if, in a strange company, we should chance to stumble in quoting him, an English voice, or an Irish one, corrects us; much of the business of life is mingled with his verse: and the lover, whether in joy or sorrow, will find that Burns has anticipated every throb of his heart:—

> "Every pulse along his veins,
> And every roving fancy."

He was the first of our northern poets who brought deep passion and high energy to the service of the muse, who added sublimity to simplicity, and found loveliness and elegance dwelling among the cottages of his native land. His simplicity is graceful as well as strong; he is never mean, never weak, never vulgar, and but seldom coarse. All he says is above the mark of other men: his language is familiar, yet dignified; careless, yet concise; and he touches on the most ordinary—nay, perilous themes, with a skill so rare and felicitous, that good fortune seems to unite with good taste in helping him through the Slough of Despond, in which so many meaner spirits have wallowed. No one has greater power in adorning the humble, and dignifying the plain—no one else has so happily picked the sweet fresh flowers of poesy from among the thorns and brambles of the ordinary paths of existence.

"The excellence of Burns," says Thomas Carlyle—a

true judge, "is, indeed, among the rarest, whether in poetry or prose; but at the same time it is plain and easily recognised—his sincerity—his indisputable air of truth. Here are no fabulous woes or joys; no hollow fantastic sentimentalities; no wire-drawn refinings either in thought or feeling: the passion that is traced before us has glowed in a living heart; the opinion he utters has risen in his own understanding, and been a light to his own steps. He does not write from hearsay, but from sight and experience: it is the scenes he has lived and labored amidst that he describes; those scenes, rude and humble as they are, have kindled beautiful emotions in his soul, noble thoughts, and definite resolves; and he speaks forth what is in him, not from any outward call of vanity or interest, but because his heart is too full to be silent. He speaks it, too, with such melody and modulation as he can—in homely rustic jingle—but it is his own, and genuine. This is the grand secret for finding readers, and retaining them: let him who would move and convince others, be first moved and convinced himself."

It must be mentioned, in abatement of this high praise, that Burns occasionally speaks with too little delicacy. He violates without necessity the true decorum of his subject, and indulges in hidden meanings and allusions, such as the most tolerant cannot applaud. Nor is this the worst: he is much too free in his treatment of matters holy. He ventures to take the Deity to task about his own passions, and the order of nature, in a way less reverent than he employs when winning his way to woman's love. He has, in truth, touches of profanity which make the pious shudder. In the warmth of conversation such expressions might escape from the lips; but they should not have been coolly sanctioned in the closet with the pen. These deformities are not, however, of frequent occurrence; and, what is some extenuation, they are generally united to a noble or natural sentiment. He is not profane or indecorous for the sake of being so: his faults, as well as his beauties, come from an overflowing fulness of mind.

His songs have all the beauties, and none of the faults, of his poems. As compositions to be sung, a finer and

more scientific harmony, and a more nicely-modulated dance of words were required, and Burns had both in perfection. They flow as readily to the music as if both the air and verse had been created together, and blend and mingle like two uniting streams. The sentiments are from nature; and they never, in any instance, jar or jangle with the peculiar feeling of the music. While humming the air over during the moments of composition, the words came and took their proper places, each according to the meaning of the air: rugged expressions could not well mingle with thoughts inspired by harmony.

In his poems Burns supposes himself in the society of men, and indulges in reckless sentiments and unmeasured language: in his songs he imagines himself in softer company: when woman's eye is on him he is gentle, persuasive, and impassioned; he is never boisterous; he seeks not to say fine things, yet he never misses saying them; his compliments are uttered of free will, and all his thoughts flow naturally from the subject. There is a natural grace and fascination about his songs; all is earnest and from the heart: he is none of your millinery bards who deal in jewelled locks, laced garments, and shower pearls and gems by the bushel on youth and beauty. He makes bright eyes, flushing cheeks: the music of the tongue, and the pulses' maddening play do all. Those charms he knew came from heaven, and not out of the tirewoman's basket, and would last when fashions changed. It is remarkable that the most naturally elegant and truly impassioned songs in the language were written by a ploughman-lad in honor of the rustic lasses around him.

If we regard the songs of Burns as so many pastoral pictures, we will find that he has an eye for the beauties of nature as accurate and as tasteful as the happiest landscape painter. Indeed, he seldom gives us a finished image of female loveliness without the accompaniment of blooming flowers, running streams, waving woods, and the melody of birds: this is the frame-work which sets off the portrait. He has recourse rarely to embellishments borrowed from art; the lighted hall and the thrilling strings are less to him than a walk with her he loves by

some lonely rivulet's side when the dews are beginning to glisten on the lilies and weigh them down, and the moon is moving not unconsciously above them. In all this we may recognise a true poet—one who felt that woman's loveliness triumphed over these fragrant accompaniments, and who regarded her still as the "blood royal of life," the brightest part of creation.

Those who desire to feel, in their full force, the songs of Burns, must not hope it from scientific singers in the theatres. The right scene is the pastoral glen; the right tongue for utterance is that of a shepherd lass; and the proper song is that which belongs to her present feelings. The gowany glen, the nibbling sheep, the warbling birds, and the running stream give the inanimate, while the singer herself personates the living, beauty of the song. I have listened to a country girl singing one of his songs, while she spread her webs to bleach by a running stream —ignorant of her audience—with such feeling and effect as were quite overpowering. This will keep the fame of Burns high among us; should the printer's ink dry up, ten thousand melodious tongues will preserve his songs to remote generations.

The variety, too, of his lyrics is equal to their truth and beauty. He has written songs which echo the feelings of every age and condition in life. He personates all the passions of man and all the gradations of affection. He sings the lover hastening through storm and tempest to see the object of his attachment—the swelling stream, the haunted wood, and the suspicious parents are all alike disregarded. He paints him again on an eve of July, when the air is calm, the grass fragrant, and no sound is abroad save the amorous cry of the partridge, enjoying the beauty of the evening as he steals by some unfrequented way to the trysting thorn, whither his mistress is hastening; or he limns him on a cold and snowy night, enjoying a brief parley with her whom he loves, from a cautiously opened window, which shows her white arm and bright eyes, and the shadow perhaps of a more fortunate lover, which accounts for the marks of feet impressed in the snow on the way to her dwelling. Nor is he always sighing and vowing; some of his heroes answer scorn

with scorn, are saucy with the saucy, and proud with the proud, and comfort themselves with sarcastic comments on woman and her fickleness and folly; others drop all allegiance to that fantastic idol beauty, and while mirth abounds, and "the wine-cup shines in light," find wonderous solace. He laughs at the sex one moment, and adores them the next—he ridicules and satirizes—he vows and entreats—he traduces and he deifies—all in a breath. Burns was intimate with the female heart, and with the romantic mode of courtship practised in the pastoral districts of Caledonia. He was early initiated into all the mysteries of rustic love, and had tried his eloquence such with success among the maidens of the land, that one of them said, "Open your eyes and shut your ears with Rob Burns, and there's nae fear o' your heart; but close your eyes and open your ears and you'll lose it."

Of all lyric poets he is the most prolific and various. Of one hundred and sixty songs which he communicated to Johnson's Museum, all, save a score or so, are either his composition, or amended with such skill and genius as to be all but made his own. For Thomson he wrote little short of a hundred. He took a peculiar pleasure in ekeing out and amending the old and imperfect songs of his country. He has exercised his fancy and taste to a greater extent that way than antiquarians either like or seem willing to acknowledge. Scott, who performed for the ballads of Scotland what Burns did for many of her songs, perceived this:—"The Scottish tunes and songs," he remarked, "preserved for Burns that inexpressible charm which they have ever afforded to his countrymen. He entered into the idea of collecting their fragments with the zeal of an enthusiast; and few, whether serious or humorous, past through his hands without receiving some of those magic touches, which, without greatly altering the song, restored its original spirit, or gave it more than it previously possessed. So dexterously are those touches combined with the ancient structure, that the *rifacciamento*, in many instances, could scarcely have been detected without the avowal of the Bard himself. Neither would it be easy to mark his share in the individual ditties. Some he appears to have entirely

rewritten; to others he added supplementary stanzas; in some he retained only the leading lines and the chorus; and others he merely arranged and ornamented." No one has ever equalled him in these exquisite imitations: he he caught up the peculiar spirit of the old song at once; he thought as his elder brother in rhyme thought, and communicated an antique sentiment and tone to all the verses which he added. Finer feeling, purer fancy, more exquisite touches of nature, and more vigorous thoughts were the result of this intercourse. Burns found Scottish song like a fruit-tree in winter, not dead, though unbudded; nor did he leave it till it was covered with bloom and beauty. He sharpened the sarcasm, deepened the passion, heightened the humor, and abated the indelicacy of his country's lyrics.

"To Burn's ear," says Wilson—a high judge in all poetic questions—"the lowly lays of Scotland were familiar, and most dear were they all to his heart. Often had he 'sung aloud old songs that are the music of the heart;' and, some day, to be able himself to breathe such strains was his dearest, his highest ambition. His genius and his moral frame were thus embued with the spirit of our old traditionary ballad poetry; and, as soon as all his passions were ripe, the voice of song was on all occasions of deep and tender interest—the voice of his daily, his nightly speech. Those old songs were his models; he felt as they felt, and looked up with the same eyes on the same objects. So entirely was their language his language, that all the beautiful lines, and half-lines, and single words that, because of something in them most exquisitely true to nature, had survived the rest of the compositions to which they had long ago belonged, were sometimes adopted by him, almost unconsciously it might seem, in his finest inspirations; and oftener still sounded in his ear like a key-note, on which he pitched his own plaintive tune of the heart till the voice and language of the old and new days were but as one." He never failed to surpass what he imitated; he added fruit to the tree, and fragrance to the flower. That his songs are a solace to Scottish hearts in far lands we know from many sources; the poetic testimony of an inspired witness is all we shall call for at present:—

"Encamped by Indian rivers wild,
The soldier, resting on his arms,
In Burn's carol sweet recalls
The scenes that blessed him when a child,
And glows and gladdens at the charms
Of Scotia's woods and waterfalls."

A want of chivalry has been instanced as a radical fault in the lyrics of Burns. He certainly is not of the number who approach beauty with much awe or reverence, and who raise loveliness into an idol for man to fall down and worship. The polished courtesies and romantic affectations of high society had not found their way among the maidens of Kyle; the midnight tryste, and the stolen interview—the rapture to meet, and the anguish to part—the secret vow, and the scarce audible whisper, were dear to their bosoms; and they were unacquainted with moving in parallel lines, and breathing sighs into roses, in the affairs of the heart. To draw a magic circle of affection round those he loved, which could not be passed without lowering them from the station of angels, forms no part of the lyrical system of Burns' poetic wooing: there is no affectation in him; he speaks like one unconscious of the veneered and varnished civilities of artificial life; he feels that true love is unacquainted with fashionable distinctions, and in all he has written has thought but of the natural man and woman, and the uninfluenced emotions of the heart. Some have charged him with a want of delicacy—an accusation easily answered: he is rapturous, he is warm, he is impassioned—his heart cannot contain its ecstasies; he glows with emotion as a crystal goblet with wine; but in none of his best songs is there the least indelicacy. Love is with him a leveller; passion and feeling are of themselves as little influenced by fashion and manners as the wind is in blowing, or the sun in shining; chivalry, and even notions of delicacy, are changeable things; our daughters speak no longer with the free tongues of their great-grandmothers, and young men no longer challenge wild lions, or keep dangerous castles in honor of their ladies' eyes.

The prose of Burns has much of the original merit of his poetry; but it is seldom so pure, so natural, and so

sustained. It abounds with bright bits, fine out-flashings, gentle emotions, and uncommon warmth and ardor. It is very unequal; sometimes it is simple and vigorous; now and then inflated and cumbrous; and he not seldom labors to say weighty and decided things, in which a "double double toil and trouble" sort of labor is visible. "But hundreds even of his most familiar letters"—I adopt the words of Wilson—"are perfectly artless, though still most eloquent compositions. Simple we may not call them, so rich are they in fancy, so overflowing in feeling, and dashed off in every other paragraph with the easy boldness of a great master, conscious of his strength even at times when, of all things in the world, he was least solicitous about display; while some there are so solemn, so sacred, so religious, that he who can read them with an unstirred heart can have no trust, no hope, in the immortality of the soul." Those who desire to feel him in his strength, must taste him in his Scottish spirit. There he spoke the language of life: in English, he spoke that of education; he had to think in the former before he could express himself in the latter. In the language in which his mother sung and nursed him, he excelled; a dialect reckoned barbarous by scholars, grew classic and elevated when uttered by the tongue of Robert Burns."

Of the family and fame of the Poet something should be said. Good and active friends bestirred themselves after his death; Currie munificently wrote his life and edited his works: Robert, his eldest son, was placed in the Stamp-office by Lord Sidmouth: cadetships in India were generously obtained for William and James by Sir James Shaw, who otherwise largely befriended the family: and Lord Panmure nobly presented one hundred pounds annually to his widow, till the success of her sons in India enabled them to interpose, and take—not without remonstrance—that pious duty on themselves. The venerable Mrs. Burns lives in the house where her eminent husband died: all around her has an air of comfort, and she has been enabled to save a small sum out of her annual income: her brother, a London merchant of much

respectability, has long interested himself in her affairs: and her brother-in-law, Gilbert, died lately, after having established his family successfully in the world.

The citizens of my native Dumfries feel the honor which the Poet's ashes confer on them: Mill-hole-brae has been named Burns-street: the walks are reverenced where he loved to muse; and his grave may be traced by the well-trodden pathways which pass the unnoticed tombs of the learned, the pious, the brave, and the far-descended, and lead to that of the inspired Peasant.—Honors have elsewhere been liberally paid to his name: a fair monument is raised to him on the Doon: a noble statue, from the hand of Flaxman, stands in Edinburgh; and Burns-clubs celebrate his birth-day in the chief towns and cities of Britain. On the banks of the Amazons, Mississippi, St. Lawrence, Indus, and the Ganges, his name is annually invoked and his songs sung: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Campbell have celebrated him in verse: statues are made from his chief characters; pictures painted from his vivid delineations; and even the rafters of Alloway-kirk have been formed into ornaments for the necks of ladies, and quaighs for the hands of men. Such is the influence of genius!

POEMS.

NOTICE

TO THE SECOND VOLUME OF THE ENGLISH EDITION.

To arrange the Poems according to the order in which they were composed, and supply the places and names hitherto left blank, was the aim of the Editor. In this he has been assisted by some of the early friends of Burns, and aided by a copy of his Poems, in which, for the information of Dr. Geddes, he had filled up all deficiencies with his own hand. Though correct, perhaps, in general, he fears that he may have erred in particular instances. "The Kirk's Alarm," he was told, was partly, if not wholly, written during the Old and New Light discussions: but that, to suit the controversy in which Dr. M'Gill was engaged, the Poet modified and augmented it. The Editor has ventured to print one copy of the poem along with the controversial satires of the year 1785, *reserving a later version—differing from the other both in manner and matter—to accompany the Poems of the year* 1789. *He has availed himself of variations in the Poet's manuscripts—particularly in poems printed after his death. He has followed, in general, the text of the first Edinburgh edition, and added such notes, biographical, historical, or critical, as he thought would be acceptable to the reader.*

February, 1834.

PREFACE

TO THE

FIRST OR KILMARNOCK EDITION,

(July 1786.)

The following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and, perhaps, amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme with an eye to Theocritus or Virgil. To the author of this, these, and other celebrated names, their countrymen are, at least in their original language, *a fountain shut up, and a book sealed.* Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him in his, and their native language. Though a rhymer from his earliest years, at least from the earliest impulse of the softer passions, it was not till very lately that the applause, perhaps the partiality, of friendship awakened his vanity so far as to make him think any thing of his worth showing: and none of the following works were composed with a view to the press. To amuse himself with the little creations of his own fancy, amid the toil and fatigue of a laborious life; to transcribe the various feelings—the loves, the griefs, the hopes, the fears—in his own breast; to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind—these were his motives for courting the Muses, and in these he found poetry to be its own reward.

Now that he appears in the public character of an author, he does it with fear and trembling. So dear is

fame to the rhyming tribe, that even he, an obscure, nameless Bard, shrinks aghast at the thought of being branded as—an impertinent blockhead, obtruding his nonsense on the world; and, because he can make a shift to jingle a few doggerel Scotch rhymes together, looking upon himself as a poet of no small consequence, forsooth!

It is an observation of that celebrated poet, Shenstone, whose divine elegies do honor to our language, our nation, and our species, that "*Humility* has depressed many a genius to a hermit, but never raised one to fame!" If any critic catches at the word *genius*, the author tells him, once for all, that he certainly looks upon himself as possessed of some poetic abilities, otherwise his publishing in the manner he has done would be a manœuvre below the worst character which, he hopes, his worst enemy will ever give him. But to the genius of a Ramsay, or the glorious dawnings of the poor, unfortunate Fergusson, he, with equal unaffected sincerity, declares, that even in his highest pulse of vanity, he has not the most distant pretensions. These two justly admired Scotch poets he has often had in his eye in the following pieces, but rather with a view to kindle at their flame than for servile imitation.

To his Subscribers, the Author returns his most sincere thanks. Not the mercenary bow over a counter, but the heart-throbbing gratitude of the Bard, conscious how much he owes to benevolence and friendship for gratifying him, if he deserves it, in that dearest wish of every poetic bosom—to be distinguished. He begs his readers, particularly the learned and the polite, who may honor him with a perusal, that they will make every allowance for education and circumstances of life; but if, after a fair, candid, and impartial criticism, he shall stand convicted of dulness and nonsense, let him be done by as he would in that case do by others—let him be condemned without mercy to contempt and oblivion.

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND OR EDINBURGH EDITION.

DEDICATION

TO THE

NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN

OF THE

CALEDONIAN HUNT.

My Lords and Gentlemen:

A Scottish Bard, proud of the name, and whose highest ambition is to sing in his country's service, where shall he so properly look for patronage as to the illustrious names of his native land; those who bear the honors and inherit the virtues of their ancestors? The Poetic Genius of my Country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha—at the PLOUGH, and threw her inspiring mantle over me. She bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my native soil, in my native tongue; I tuned my wild, artless notes as she inspired. She whispered me to come to this ancient metropolis of Caledonia, and lay my Songs under your honored protection: I now obey her dictates.

Though much indebted to your goodness, I do not approach you, my Lords and Gentlemen, in the usual style of dedication, to thank you for past favors: that path is so hackneyed by prostituted learning that honest rusticity is ashamed of it. Nor do I present this

Address with the venal soul of a servile author, looking for a continuation of those favors: I was bred to the plough, and am independent. I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. I come to congratulate my country that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated, and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty. In the last place, I come to proffer my warmest wishes to the great fountain of honor, the Monarch of the universe for your welfare and happiness.

When you go forth to waken the echoes, in the ancient and favorite amusement of your forefathers, may Pleasure ever be of your party: and may social Joy await your return! When harrassed in courts or camps with the jostlings of bad men and bad measures, may the honest consciousness of injured worth attend your return to your native seats; and may domestic happiness, with a smiling welcome, meet you at your gates! May corruption shrink at your kindling indignant glance; and may tyranny in the ruler, and licentiousness in the people, equally find you an inexorable foe!

I have the honor to be,

With the sincerest gratitude, and highest respect,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your most devoted humble Servant,

ROBERT BURNS.

Edinburgh,
April 4, 1787.

POEMS.

WINTER.

A DIRGE.

The wintry west extends his blast,
And hail and rain does blaw;
Or the stormy north sends driving forth
The blinding sleet and snaw:
While tumbling brown, the burn comes down,
And roars frae bank to brae;
And bird and beast in covert rest,
And pass the heartless day.

"The sweeping blast, the sky o'ercast,"*
The joyless winter day
Let others fear, to me more dear
Than all the pride of May:
The tempest's howl, it soothes my soul,
My griefs it seems to join;
The leafless trees my fancy please,
Their fate resembles mine!

Thou Power Supreme, whose mighty scheme
These woes of mine fulfil,
Here, firm, I rest, they must be best,
Because they are Thy will!
Then all I want (O, do thou grant
This one request of mine!)
Since to enjoy thou dost deny,
Assist me to resign.

* Dr. Young.

With the exception of one or two songs, this Dirge is the earliest of all the Poet's compositions: Gilbert Burns calls it a juvenile production, but assigns no date; it was written before the death of his father. That Burns thought well of it himself we have his own testimony. In his memoranda of April 1784, he says, "There is scarcely any earthly object gives me more—I do not know if I should call it pleasure—but something which exalts me—something which enraptures me—than to walk in the sheltered side of a wood, or high plantation, in a cloudy winter-day, and hear the stormy wind howling among the trees and raving over the plain. It is my best season for devotion; my mind is rapt up in a kind of enthusiasm to Him who, in the pompous language of the Hebrew bard, 'walks on the wings of the wind.' In one of these seasons, just after a train of misfortunes, I composed 'Winter, a Dirge.'" Sorrow gave a melancholy coloring to the Poet's thoughts early in life, and induced him to love the sublimity of the tempestuous sky, and the grandeur of the shaken woods.

THE
DEATH AND DYING WORDS
OF
POOR MAILIE,
THE AUTHOR'S ONLY PET YOWE.

AN UNCO MOURNFU' TALE.

As Mailie, an' her lambs thegither,
Were ae day nibbling on the tether,
Upon her cloot she coost a hitch,
An' owre she warsl'd in the ditch:
There, groaning, dying, she did lie,
When Hughoc* he cam doytin by.
Wi' glowring e'en an' lifted han's,
Poor Hughoc like a statue stands;
He saw her days were near-hand ended,
But, waes my heart! he could na mend it!
He gaped wide but naething spak—
At length poor Mailie silence brak.

* A neibor herd-callan.

"O thou, whose lamentable face
Appears to mourn my woefu' case!
My dying words attentive hear,
An' bear them to my master dear.

"Tell him, if e'er again he keep
As muckle gear as buy a sheep,
O bid him never tie them mair
Wi' wicked strings o' hemp or hair!
But ca' them out to park or hill,
An' let them wander at their will;
So may his flock increase, and grow
To scores o' lambs, an' packs o' woo'!

"Tell him he was a master kin'
An' ay was gude to me and mine;
An' now my dying charge I gie him,
My helpless lambs I trust them wi' him.

"O bid him save their harmless lives
Frae dogs, and tods, an' butchers' knives!
But gie them guid cow-milk their fill,
Till they be fit to fend themsel;
An' tent them duly, e'en an' morn,
Wi' teats o' hay, an' ripps o' corn.

"An' may they never learn the gaets
Of ither vile, wanrestfu' pets!
To slink thro' slaps, an' reave an' steal
At stacks o' pease, or stocks o' kail.
So may they, like their great forbears,
For monie a year come thro' the shears:
So wives will gie them bits o' bread,
An' bairns greet for them when they're dead.

"My poor toop-lamb, my son an' heir,
O bid him breed him up wi' care;
An' if he live to be a beast,
To pit some havins in his breast!

An' warn him, what I winna name,
To stay content wi' yowes at hame;
An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
Like ither menseless, graceless brutes.

"An' niest my yowie, silly thing,
Gude keep thee frae a tether string!
O may thou ne'er forgather up
Wi' ony blastit, moorland toop,
But ay keep mind to moop an' meil
Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel.

"And now, my bairns, wi' my last breath
I lea'e my blessin wi' you baith:
An' when you think upo' your mither,
Mind to be kin' to ane anither.

"Now, honest Hughoc, dinna fail
To tell my master a' my tale;
An' bid him burn this cursed tether,
An', for thy pains, thou'se get my blether."
This said, poor Mailie turn'd her head,
And clos'd her een amang the dead.

The field and the ditch where Mailie met with her mishap are still, I am informed, pointed out on the farm of Lochlea. "The circumstances of the poor sheep," says Gilbert, "were pretty much as Robert has described them. He had, partly by way of frolic, bought a ewe and two lambs from a neighbour, and she was tethered in a field adjoining the house at Lochlea. He and I were going out with our teams, and our two younger brothers, to drive for us at mid-day, when Hugh Wilson, a curious-looking, awkward boy, clad in plaiding, came to us with much anxiety in his face, with the information that the ewe had entangled herself in the tether, and was lying in the ditch. Robert was much tickled with Hughoc's appearance and postures on the occasion. Poor Mailie was set to rights, and when we returned from the plough in the evening, he repeated to me her 'Death and Dying Words,' pretty much in the way they now stand." There is something characteristic in the re-

quest which Mailie makes, that her son and heir may be brought up in a modest and decent way, and taught to be content with the pleasures of his own fields :—

> "An' no to rin an' wear his cloots,
> Like other menseless, graceless brutes."

Nor is she unmindful of the education of her "Yowie silly thing :" she warns her against the inroads of moorland tups, and exclaims with her last breath :—

> "But ay keep mind to moop an' mell
> Wi' sheep o' credit like thysel!"

Burns loved pastoral similitudes : in his lampoons on the western clergy he scattered them profusely. In the "Ordination" he enjoins the new pastor to look to the purity of his flock, and be stern about crosses in breeds, and all such matters as injure the flesh and the fleece. In the "Holy Tulzie," too, we find similar allusions—a sort of parody on the figurative sermons of the children of the "Old Light."

POOR MAILIE'S ELEGY.

Lament in rhyme, lament in prose,
Wi' saut tears trickling down your nose ;
Our bardie's fate is at a close,
Past a' remead ;
The last sad cape-stane of his woes ;
Poor Mailie's dead!

It's no the loss o' warl's gear,
That could sae bitter draw the tear,
Or mak our bardie, dowie, wear
The mourning weed :
He's lost a friend and neebor dear,
In Mailie dead.

Thro' a' the toun she trotted by him ;
A lang half-mile she could descry him ;
Wi' kindly bleat, when she did spy him,
She ran wi' speed :
A friend mair faithfu' ne'er cam nigh him
Than Mailie dead.

I wat she was a sheep o' sense,
An' could behave hersel wi' mense:
I'll say't, she never brak a fence,
Thro' thievish greed.
Our bardie, lanely, keeps the spence
Sin' Mailie's dead.

Or, if he wanders up the howe,
Her living image in her yowe,
Comes bleating to him, owre the knowe,
For bits o' bread;
An' down the briny pearls rowe
For Mailie dead.

She was nae get o' moorland tips,
Wi' tawted ket, an' hairy hips;
For her forbears were brought in ships
Frae yont the Tweed:
A bonier fleesh ne'er cross'd the clips
Than Mailie's dead.

Wae worth the man wha first did shape
That vile, wanchancie thing—a rape!
It maks guid fellows girn an' gape,
Wi' chokin dread;
An' Robin's bonnet wave wi' crape,
For Mailie dead.

O, a' ye bards on bonnie Doon!
An' wha on Ayr your chanters tune!
Come, join the melancholious croon
O' Robin's reed!
His heart will never get aboon!
His Mailie's dead.

"Poor Mailie's Elegy" is a later production somewhat than "The Death and Dying Words." It is freer in language and bolder in expression, and more like the vigorous offspring of

Mossgiel than the progeny of Lochlea. He already looked upon himself as a poet: the last copestone is laid, he says, on his woes: he has not spirit to move out of the house, and calls on his tuneful brethren who dwell on the Doon and the Ayr, to—

> "Join the melancholious croon
> O' Robin's reed."

His earliest compositions appear to have been frequently revised and corrected—and his alterations are all for the better. "The stanza," says Gilbert,

> "'She was nae get o' moorland tips,'

was, at first, as follows—

> 'She was nae get o' runted rams,
> Wi' woo' like goats, an' legs like trams,
> She was the flower o' Fairlie lambs,
> A famous breed;
> Now Robin, greetin', chews the hams
> O' Mailie dead.'"

The taste of Burns rejected the verse, because the concluding lines jarred with the ruling sentiment of the poem.

FIRST
EPISTLE TO DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

[David Sillar, Schoolmaster and Bard.]

—*January*, 1784.

I.

While winds frae aff Ben-Lomond blaw,
And bar the doors wi' driving snaw,
And hing us owre the ingle,
I set me down to pass the time,
And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,
In hamely westlin jingle.
While frosty winds blaw in the drift,
Ben to the chimla lug,
I grudge a wee the great folks' gift,
That live sae bien an' snug:

I tent less, and want less
Their roomy fire-side;
But hanker and canker
To see their cursed pride.

II.

It's hardly in a body's power
To keep, at times, frae being sour,
To see how things are shar'd;
How best o' chiels are whiles in want,
While coofs on countless thousands rant,
And ken na how to wair't;
But Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,
Tho' we hae little gear,
We're fit to win our daily bread,
As lang's we're hale and fier:
"Mair spier na, no fear na,"*
Auld age ne'er mind a feg,
The last o't, the warst o't,
Is only but to beg.

III.

To lie in kilns and barns at e'en
When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,
Is, doubtless, great distress!
Yet then content could make us blest;
Ev'n then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste
Of truest happiness.
The honest heart that's free frae a'
Intended fraud or guile,
However fortune kick the ba',
Has ay some cause to smile:
And mind still, you'll find still,
A comfort this nae sma';
Nae mair then, we'll care then,
Nae farther we can fa'.

IV.

What tho', like commoners of air,
We wander out we know not where,

* Ramsay.

But either house or hal'?
Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all.
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound
To see the coming year:
On braes when we please, then,
We'll sit and sowth a tune;
Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,
And sing't when we hae done.

V.

It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest;
It's no in makin muckle mair;
It's no in books; it's no in lear,
To make us truly blest;
If happiness hae not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest:
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrang.

VI.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,
Wha drudge and drive thro' wet an' dry,
Wi' never-ceasing toil;
Think ye, are we less blest than they,
Wha scarcely tent us in their way,
As hardly worth their while?
Alas! how aft, in haughty mood
God's creatures they oppress!
Or else, neglecting a' that's guid,
They riot in excess!

Baith careless and fearless
Of either heaven or hell!
Esteeming and deeming
It's a' an idle tale!

VII.

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;
Nor make our scanty pleasures less,
By pining at our state;
And, even should misfortunes come,
I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,
An's thankfu' for them yet.
They gie the wit of age to youth;
They let us ken oursel;
They make us see the naked truth,
The real guid and ill.
Tho' losses, and crosses,
Be lessons right severe,
There's wit there, ye'll get there,
Ye'll find nae other where.

VIII.

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!
(To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,
And flatt'ry I detest),
This life has joys for you and I;
And joys that riches ne'er could buy:
And joys the very best.
There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,
The lover an' the frien';
Ye hae your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean!
It warms me, it charms me,
To mention but her name:
It heats me, it beets me,
And sets me a' on flame!

IX.

O, all ye pow'rs who rule above!
O Thou, whose very self art love!

Thou kno'wst my words sincere!
The life-blood streaming thro' my heart,
Or my more dear immortal part,
Is not more fondly dear!
When heart-corroding care and grief
Deprive my soul of rest,
Her dear idea brings relief
And solace to my breast.
Thou Being, All-seeing,
O hear my fervent pray'r!
Still take her, and make her
Thy most peculiar care!

X.

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!
The smile of love, the friendly tear,
The sympathetic glow!
Long since, this world's thorny ways
Had number'd out my weary days,
Had it not been for you!
Fate still has blest me with a friend,
In every care and ill;
And oft a more endearing band,
A tie more tender still.
It lightens, it brightens
The tenebrific scene,
To meet with, and greet with
My Davie or my Jean!

XI.

O, how that name inspires my style!
The words come skelpin, rank and file,
Amaist before I ken!
The ready measure rins as fine,
As Phœbus and the famous Nine
Were glowrin owre my pen.
My spaviet Pegasus will limp,
'Till ance he's fairly het;

And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,
An' rin an unco fit:
But lest then, the beast then
Should rue this hasty ride,
I'll light now, and dight now
His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

The hero of this Epistle is the well-known David Sillar, a scholar and a poet, and lately one of the magistrates of Irvine. He published a little volume of verses, some of which displayed considerable talent; his stories in rhyme are easy and humorous. At the time that he became intimate with the family of William Burness he kept the parish school; Robert, who never neglected an opportunity of obtaining knowledge, cultivated his acquaintance, and was his frequent companion in excursions among the hills and vales of Kyle, to look at the beauties of nature, animate and inanimate. He loved the memory of his gifted comrade, and enriched his biography with some interesting anecdotes. The Poet seems to have been fond of epistolary verse; but, in the specimen before me, he has chosen to move in fetters. The intricate measure of "the Cherry and the Slae," appears not to have impeded the flow of his thoughts nor the gracefulness of his expression.—"It was, I think," says Gilbert, "in summer 1784, when, in the interval of harder labor, Robert and I were weeding in the garden, that he repeated to me the principal part of this Epistle." To retire from hard labor in the field to work in the garden at home, reminds me of the tender mercies of the north-country saying—"Bairns, when you're tired digging, you may pou kale-runts!"

"I was much pleased," continues Gilbert, "with the Epistle, and said to him, I was of opinion it would bear being printed, and that it would be well received by people of taste; that I thought it at least equal, if not superior, to many of Allan Ramsay's epistles, and that the merit of these, and much other Scotch poetry, seemed to consist principally in the knack of the expression; but here, there was a strain of interesting sentiment."

ADDRESS TO THE DEIL.

"O Prince! O Chief of many throned Pow'rs,
That led the embattled Seraphim to war."
MILTON.

O THOU! whatever title suit thee,
Auld Hornie, Satan, Nick, or Clootie,
Wha in yon cavern grim an' sootie,
Closed under hatches,
Spairges about the brunstane cootie,
To scaud poor wretches!

Hear me, auld Hangie, for a wee,
An' let poor damned bodies be;
I'm sure sma' pleasure it can gie,
E'en to a deil,
To skelp an' scaud poor dogs like me,
An' hear us squeel!

Great is thy pow'r, an' great thy fame;
Far kend an' noted is thy name;
An' thó' yon lowin heugh's thy hame,
Thou travels far;
An', faith! thou's neither lag nor lame,
Nor blate nor scaur.

Whyles, ranging like a roaring lion,
For prey, a' holes an' corners tryin;
Whyles on the strong-wing'd tempest flyin,
Tirlin the kirks;
Whyles, in the human bosom pryin,
Unseen thou lurks.

I've heard my reverend Graunie say,
In lanely glens ye like to stray;
Or where auld-ruin'd castles, gray,
Nod to the moon,
Ye fright the nightly wand'rer's way
Wi' eldritch croon.

When twilight did my Graunie summon,
To say her prayers, douce, honest woman!
Aft yont the dyke she's heard you bummin,
Wi' eerie drone;
Or, rustlin, through the boortries comin,
Wi' heavy groan.

Ae dreary, windy, winter night,
The stars shot down wi' sklentin light,
Wi' you, mysel, I gat a fright
Ayont the lough;
Ye, like a rash-bush, stood in sight,
Wi' waving sough.

The cudgel in my nieve did shake,
Each bristl'd hair stood like a stake,
When wi' an eldritch, stoor quaick—quaick—
Amang the springs,
Awa ye squatter'd like a drake,
On whistling wings.

Let warlocks grim, an' wither'd hags,
Tell how wi' you, on ragweed nags,
They skim the muirs an' dizzy crags,
Wi' wicked speed;
And in kirk-yards renew their leagues
Owre howkit dead.

Thence countra wives, wi' toil an' pain,
May plunge an' plunge the kirn in vain:
For, oh! the yellow treasure's taen
By witching skill;
An' dawtit, twal-pint hawkie's gaen
As yell's the bill.

Thence mystic knots mak great abuse
On young guidmen, fond, keen, an' crouse;
When the best wark-lume i' the house,
By cantrip wit,
Is instant made no worth a louse,
Just at the bit.

When thowes dissolve the snawy hoord,
An' float the jinglin' icy-boord,
Then water-kelpies haunt the foord,
By your direction;
An' nighted trav'llers are allur'd
To their destruction.

An' aft your moss-traversing spunkies
Decoy the wight that late an' drunk is:
The bleezin, curst, mischievous monkeys
Delude his eyes,
Till in some miry slough he sunk is,
Ne'er mair to rise.

When masons' mystic word an' grip
In storms an' tempests raise you up,
Some cock or cat your rage maun stop,
Or, strange to tell!
The youngest brother ye wad whip
Aff straught to hell!

Lang syne, in Eden's bonnie yard,
When youthfu' lovers first were pair'd,
An' all the soul of love they shar'd,
The raptur'd hour,
Sweet on the fragrant, flow'ry sward,
In shady bow'r:

Then you, ye auld, snic-drawing dog!
Ye came to Paradise incog.
An' play'd on man a cursed brogue,
(Black be your fa!)
An' gied the infant warld a shog,
'Maist ruin'd a'.

D'ye mind that day, when in a bizz,
Wi' reekit duds, an' reestit gizz,
Ye did present your smoutie phiz
'Mang better folk,
An' sklented on the man of Uz
Your spitefu' joke?

An' how ye gat him i' your thrall,
An' brak him out o' house an' hall,
While scabs an' botches did him gall,
Wi' bitter claw,
An' lows'd his ill tongu'd, wicked scawl,
Was warst ava?

But a' your doings to rehearse,
Your wily snares an' fechtin fierce,
Sin' that day Michael did you pierce,
Down to this time,
Wad ding a Lallan tongue, or Erse,
In prose or rhyme.

An now, auld Cloots, I ken ye're thinkin',
A certain Bardie's rantin', drinkin',
Some luckless hour will send him linkin',
To your black pit;
But, faith! he'll turn the corner jinkin',
An' cheat you yet.

But, fare you weel, auld Nickie-ben!
O wad ye tak a thought an' men'!
Ye aiblins might—I dinna ken—
Still hae a stake—
I'm wae to think upo' yon den,
Ev'n for your sake!

The Prince and Power of the air is a favorite topic of rustic speculation. The peasantry complain that Milton has made Satan too acceptable to the fancy, and seem to prefer him, with his monkish attributes—horns, cloven-foot, and tail. An old shepherd told me he had, when a boy, as good as seen him. —"I was," said he, "returning from school, and stopped till the twilight, groping trouts in a burn, when a thunder-storm came on. I looked up, and just before me a cloud came down as dark as night—the queerest-shaped cloud I ever saw; and there was something terrible about it, for when it was close to me, I saw, as plain as I see you, a dark form within it, thrice the size of any earthly man. It was the Evil One himself—

there's nae doubt o' that."—Samuel," I said, "did you hear his cloven-foot on the ground?"—"No," replied he, "but I saw ane o' his horns—and O, what waves o' fire were rowing after him!"—"The Address to the Deil," says Currie, "is one of the happiest of the Poet's productions. Humor and tenderness are so happily intermixed, that it is impossible to say which preponderates." Jeffrey, too, felt the beautiful and relenting spirit in which the Poem concludes. The Devil frequently makes his appearance in our old mysteries, but he comes to work unmitigated mischief, and we part with him gladly. The "Hornie, Satan, Nick, and Clootie," who lives in the imaginations of the peasantry, is not quite such a reprobate, though his shape is any thing but prepossessing. Nor is he an object of much alarm: a knowledge of the Scriptures and a belief in heaven are considered sure protectors; and a peasant will brave a suspicious road at midnight if he can repeat a psalm.

The Poet touches on the leading topics of our superstitious beliefs; the solitary wanderings of the fiend, by lonely ruins, or among the haunts of men; his coalition with warlocks and witches, when spells are formed in kirk-yards, "owre howkit dead," which rob cows of their milk, cream of its butter, and matrimony of its joys.—"It was, I think," says Gilbert Burns, "in the winter of 1784, as we were going with carts for coals for the family fire (and I could yet point out the particular spot) that Robert first repeated to me the 'Address to the Deil.' The curious idea of such an address was suggested to him by running over in his mind the many ludicrous accounts and representations we have from various quarters of this august personage."

THE AULD FARMER'S

NEW-YEAR MORNING SALUTATION TO HIS

AULD MARE MAGGIE,

ON GIVING HER THE ACCUSTOMED RIPP OF CORN TO HANSEL IN THE NEW YEAR.

A GUID New-year I wish thee, Maggie!
Hae, there's a ripp to thy auld baggie:

Tho' thou's howe-backit, now, an' knaggie,
I've seen the day
Thou could hae gaen like onie staggie
Out-owre the lay.

Tho' now thou's dowie, stiff, an crazy,
An' thy auld hide's as white's a daisy,
I've seen thee dappl't, sleek, and glaizie,
A bonnie gray:
He should been tight that daur't to raize thee
Ance in a day.

Thou ance was i' the foremost rank,
A filly buirdly, steeve, an' swank,
An' set weel down a shapely shank,
As e'er tread yird;
An' could hae flown out-owre a stank,
Like ony bird.

It's now some nine-an'-twenty year,
Sin' thou was my guid-father's Meere;
He gied me thee, o' tocher clear,
An' fifty mark;
Tho' it was sma', 'twas weel-won gear,
An' thou was stark.

When first I gaed to woo my Jenny,
Ye then was trottin wi' your minnie:
Tho' ye was trickie, slee, an' funnie,
Ye ne'er was donsie;
But hamely, tawie, quiet, an cannie,
An' unco sonsie.

That day, ye pranc'd wi' muckle pride,
When ye bure hame my bonnie bride:
An' sweet and gracefu' she did ride,
Wi' maiden air!
Kyle Stewart I could bragged wide,
For sic a pair.

Tho' now ye dow but hoyte and hoble,
An' wintle like a saumont-coble,

That day ye was a jinker noble,
For heels an' win'!
An' ran them till they a' did wauble,
Far, far, behin'!

When thou an' I were young an' skeigh,
An' stable-meals at fairs were dreigh,
How thou wad prance, an' snore, an' skreigh,
An' tak the road!
Town's bodies ran, an' stood abeigh,
An' ca't thee mad.

When thou was corn't, an' I was mellow,
We took the road ay like a swallow:
At Brooses thou had ne'er a fellow,
For pith an' speed;
But ev'ry tail thou pay't them hollow,
Whare'er thou gaed.

The sma', droop-rumpl't hunter cattle,
Might aiblins waur't thee for a brattle;
But sax Scotch miles thou try't their mettle,
An' gar't them whaizle:
Nae whip nor spur, but just a wattle
O' saugh or hazle.

Thou was a noble fittie-lan',
As e'er in tug or tow was drawn!
Aft thee an' I, in aught hours gaun,
In guid March-weather,
Hae turn'd sax rood beside our han',
For days thegither.

Thou never braindg't, an' fech't, an fliskit,
But thy auld tail thou wad hae whiskit,
An' spread abreed thy weel-fill'd brisket,
Wi' pith and pow'r,
'Till spritty knowes wad rair't and risket,
Ar' slypet owre.

When frosts lay lang, an' snaws were deep,
An' threaten'd labor back to keep,

I gied thy cog a wee-bit heap
Aboon the timmer;
I ken'd my Maggie wad na sleep
For that, or simmer.

In cart or car thou never reestit;
The steyest brae thou wad hae fac't it;
Thou never lap, and sten't, and breastit,
Then stood to blaw;
But just thy step a wee thing hastit,
Thou snoov't awa.

My pleugh is now thy bairn time a';
Four gallant brutes as e'er did draw;
Forbye sax mae, I've sell't awa,
That thou hast nurst:
They drew me thretteen pund an' twa,
The vera warst.

Monie a sair daurk we twa hae wrought,
An' wi' the weary warl' hae fought!
An' monie an anxious day, I thought
We wad be beat!
Yet here to crazy age we're brought,
Wi' something yet.

And think na, my auld, trusty servan',
That now perhaps thou's less deservin,
An' thy auld days may end in starvin,
For my last fou,
A heapit stimpart, I'll reserve ane
Laid by for you.

We've worn to crazy years thegither;
We'll toyte about wi' ane anither;
Wi' tentie care I'll flit thy tether,
To some hain'd rig,
Whare ye may nobly rax your leather,
Wi' sma' fatigue.

It was the token of a true knight in chivalry to be kind to his charger: The Kyle farmer shares in the same feeling, for he is gentle, both in word and deed, to his "Auld Mare." He recollects when she bore him triumphantly home when mellow, from markets and other meetings: how she ploughed the stiffest land and faced the steepest brae, and moreover brought home his bonnie bride—

"Kyle-Stewart I could hae bragged wide,
For sic a pair."

The farmer's praise of his faithful servant contrasts strangely with Orleans' commendations of his horse in King Henry V.— "He bounds from the earth as if his entrails were hairs. When I bestride him I soar, I am a hawk: he trots the air: the earth sings when he touches it: the basest horn of his hoof is more musical than the pipe of Hermes. It is the prince of palfreys: his neigh is like the bidding of a monarch, and his countenance enforces homage." The Cid's praise of the peerless Bavieca is in a milder strain: in no fewer than one hundred Spanish ballads this noble animal is mentioned. I must have recourse to the fine version of Lockhart:—

"The king look'd on him kindly, as on a vassal true,
Then to the king Ruy Diaz spake, after reverence due—
'O king, the thing is shameful, that any man beside
The liege lord of Castile himself should Bavieca ride.

"'For neither Spain nor Araby could another charger bring,
So good as he, and certes, the best befits my king;
But that you may behold him, and know him to the core,
I'll make him go as he was wont, when his nostrils smelt the Moor.'"

"There are three noble sights in nature," says an old authority: "a man thinking, an eagle flying, and a horse at full speed."

TO A HAGGIS.

Fair fa' your honest, sonsie face,
Great chieftain o' the puddin-race!
Aboon them a' ye tak your place,
Painch, tripe, or thairm:
Weel are ye wordy of a grace
As lang's my arm.

The groaning trencher there ye fill,
Your hurdies like a distant hill,
Your pin wad help to mend a mill
In time o' need,
While thro' your pores the dews distil
Like amber bead.

His knife see rustic labor dight,
An' cut you up wi' ready slight,
Trenching your gushing entrails bright
Like onie ditch;
And then, O what a glorious sight,
Warm-reekin, rich!

Then horn for horn they stretch an' strive,
Deil tak the hindmost, on they drive,
'Till a' their weel-swall'd kytes belyve
Are bent like drums;
Then auld guid man, maist like to rive,
Bethankit hums.

Is there that o'er his French ragout,
Or olio that wad staw a sow,
Or fricassee wad mak her spew
Wi' perfect sconner,
Looks down wi' sneering, scornfu' view
On sic a dinner!

Poor devil! see him owre his trash,
As feckless as a wither'd rash,
His spindle shank a guid whip-lash,
His nieve a nit;
Thro' bloody flood or field to dash,
O how unfit!

But mark the rustic, haggis-fed,
The trembling earth resounds his tread,
Clap in his walie nieve a blade,
He'll mak it whissle;
An' legs, an' arms, an' heads will sned,
Like taps o' thrissle,

Ye pow'rs wha mak mankind your care,
And dish them out their bill o' fare,
Auld Scotland wants nae skinking ware
That jaups in luggies;
But, if ye wish her gratefu' pray'r,
Gie her a Haggis!

The joyous nationality of this poem is but part of its merit. The "Haggis" forms one of the most savory morsels in Scottish cookery; yet I have seen men in the south look wild at it who could swallow, without pausing, that singular mixture of fatness and sweetness—minced meat. Burns, it is said, once uttered something like this poem in prose when called on to say grace where a Haggis was on the board, and the applause which he obtained induced him to work it into verse. I heard, when a boy, the Address to the Haggis recited in a boon of reapers: an old highland bandsman listened with great attention; when these lines were repeated,—

"Clap in his walie nieve a blade
He'll mak it whissle;"

he could no longer contain himself, but cried out, "It 's the God's truth! To make a steel blade whistle requires a man! There was Donald Bane, when sixty-six years old, and no sae souple as he had been, was called on to fight for the honor o' the broad sword, with a foreign braggart, 'Donald—said his chief—d'ye think yere yauld enough for him?' with that he whipt out his claymore—a broad bright bit o' steel it was—and made it whistle in the air like a hunting hawk; weel! away he gaed up the Lawn-market to the strife, and ye'll na hinder some ane frae saying, 'Ah, Donald's failed; I doubt he'll no do!' When Donald heard this, I wish ye had seen but his ee—it glented fire—he lap right up into the air, and seizing a lamp-iron far aboon other men's reach, hung by ae hand for a moment, sprang proudly down, and cried, 'She'll *do* yet!' And he did do." The classical reader will perceive in this rustic reminiscence a resemblance to that fine passage in the "Odyssey," where Ulysses strung

"His own huge bow, and with his right hand trill'd
The nerve which in its quick vibration sang
As with a swallow's voice."

The component parts of a Haggis are sometimes inquired

anxiously into by men who love the pleasures of the table.—"Pray, sir," said a man of the south, "why do you boil it in a sheep's bag; and, above all, what is it made of?"—"Sir," answered a man of the north, "we boil it in a sheep's bag, because such was the primitive way; it was invented, sir, before linen was thought of: and as for what it is made of, I dare not trust myself with telling—I can never name all the savory items without tears; and surely you would not wish me to expose myself in a public company?" A Haggis in the witty and whimsical "Noctes Ambrosianæ" of Blackwood, bursts when cut up over plate and table, floods the apartment, to the horror of the Ettrick Shepherd, and the astonishment of Christopher North.

A PRAYER

UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

O Thou Great Being! what Thou art
Surpasses me to know:
Yet sure I am, that known to Thee
Are all thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,
All wretched and distrest:
Yet sure those ills that wring my soul
Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act
From cruelty or wrath!
O, free my weary eyes from tears,
Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,
To suit some wise design;
Then man my soul with firm resolves,
To bear and not repine!

The following melancholy note accompanies these verses in the original manuscript of the Poet:—"There was a certain

period of my life that my spirit was broke by repeated losses and disasters, which threatened, and, indeed, effected the utter ruin of my fortune. My body, too, was attacked by that most dreadful distemper, a hypochondria, or confirmed melancholy. In this wretched state, the recollection of which makes me yet shudder, I hung my harp on the willow trees, except in some lucid intervals, in one of which I composed the above."

A PRAYER

IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

O Thou unknown, Almighty Cause
Of all my hope and fear!
In whose dread presence, ere an hour,
Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wander'd in those paths
Of life I ought to shun;
As something, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done;

Thou knows't that Thou hast formed me,
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.

Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stept aside,
Do Thou, All-Good! for such thou art,
In shades of darkness hide.

Where with intention I have err'd,
No other plea I have,
But, Thou art good; and goodness still
Delighteth to forgive.

This Prayer justifies the remarks of Wordsworth.—"We have rejected as false sometimes in the letter, many of the testimo-

nies that others have borne against Burns:—but by his own hand—in words, the import of which cannot be mistaken—it has been recorded that the order of his life but faintly corresponded with the clearness of his views." In fits of despondency he looked darkly on the errors of his ways; and frailties, which to men of less sensibility seemed venial, assumed hues which made him tremble. In these moods—and they were not unfrequent—indulgence at the table with his companions, profane wit, and trystings after twilight among the lasses of Kyle, grew into colossal enormities, and they pressed the harder on him because he felt that "passions, wild and strong," were ever ready to sweep resolutions of amendment away.

STANZAS

ON THE SAME OCCASION.

Why am I loth to leave this earthly scene?
Have I so found it full of pleasing charms?
Some drops of joy with draughts of ill between:
Some gleams of sunshine 'mid renewing storms:
Is it departing pangs my soul alarms?
Or death's unlovely, dreary, dark abode?
For guilt, for guilt, my terrors are in arms;
I tremble to approach an angry God,
And justly smart beneath his sin-avenging rod.

Fain would I say, "Forgive my foul offence!"
Fain promise never more to disobey;
But, should my Author health again dispense,
Again I might desert fair virtue's way:
Again in folly's path might go astray;
Again exalt the brute and sink the man;
Then how should I for heavenly mercy pray,
Who act so counter heavenly mercy's plan?
Who sin so oft have mourn'd, yet to temptation ran?

O Thou, great Governor of all below!
If I may dare a lifted eye to Thee,

Thy nod can make the tempest cease to blow,
Or still the tumult of the raging sea:
With that controlling pow'r assist ev'n me,
Those headlong furious passions to confine;
For all unfit I feel my pow'rs to be,
To rule their torrent in th' allowed line;
O, aid me with Thy help, Omnipotence Divine!

"The 'Prayer' and the 'Stanzas' were composed," says Burns, "when fainting fits and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy or some other dangerous disorder, which indeed still threatens me, first put nature on the alarm." In another place he designates the Stanzas "Misgivings in the hour of despondency and prospect of death." Elsewhere he says in his Memoranda, "The grand end of human life is to cultivate an intercourse with that Being to whom we owe life with every enjoyment that renders life delightful."

A WINTER NIGHT.

"Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are
That bide the pelting of the pitiless storm!
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and window'd raggedness defend you,
From seasons such as these?"

SHAKSPEARE.

When biting Boreas, fell and doure,
Sharp shivers thro' the leafless bow'r;
When Phœbus gies a short-lived glow'r
Far south the lift,
Dim-darkening through the flaky show'r
Or whirling drift:

Ae night the storm the steeples rocked,
Poor labor sweet in sleep was locked,
While burns, wi' snawy wreeths up-choked,
Wild-eddying swirl,

Or through the mining outlet bocked,
Down headlong hurl.

Listening, the doors an' winnocks rattle,
I thought me on the ourie cattle,
Or silly sheep, wha bide this brattle
O' winter war,
And through the drift, deep-lairing sprattle,
Beneath a scar.

Ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing,
That, in the merry months o' spring,
Delighted me to hear thee sing,
What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing,
An' close thy e'e?

Even you on murd'ring errands toil'd,
Lone from your savage homes exiled,
The blood-stained roost, and sheep-cote spoiled
My heart forgets,
While pitiless the tempest wild
Sore on you beats.

Now Phœbe, in her midnight reign,
Dark muffled, viewed the dreary plain;
Still crowding thoughts, a pensive train,
Rose in my soul,
When on my ear this plaintive strain
Slow, solemn, stole:—

"Blow, blow, ye winds, with heavier gust!
And freeze, thou bitter-biting frost!
Descend, ye chilly, smothering snows!
Not all your rage, as now united, shows
More hard unkindness, unrelenting,
Vengeful malice unrepenting,
Than heaven-illumined man on brother man bestows!

See stern oppression's iron grip,
Or mad ambition's gory hand,
Sending, like blood-hounds from the slip,
Woe, want, and murder o'er a land!
Even in the peaceful rural vale,
Truth, weeping, tells the mournful tale,
How pamper'd luxury, flattery by her side,
The parasite empoisoning her ear,
With all the servile wretches in the rear,
Looks o'er proud property, extended wide;
And eyes the simple rustic hind,
Whose toil upholds the glittering show,
A creature of another kind,
Some coarser substance, unrefined,
Placed for her lordly use thus far, thus vile, below.
Where, where is love's fond, tender throe,
With lordly honor's lofty brow,
The powers you proudly own?
Is there, beneath love's noble name,
Can harbour dark the selfish aim,
To bless himself alone!
Mark maiden innocence a prey
To love-pretending snares,
This boasted honor turns away,
Shunning soft pity's rising sway,
Regardless of the tears and unavailing prayers!
Perhaps this hour, in misery's squalid nest,
She strains your infant to her joyless breast,
And with a mother's fears shrinks at the rocking blast!
Oh ye! who, sunk in beds of down,
Feel not a want but what yourselves create,
Think, for a moment, on his wretched fate,
Whom friends and fortune quite disown!
Ill satisfied keen nature's clamorous call,
Stretched on his straw he lays himself to sleep,
While through the ragged roof and chinky wall,
Chill o'er his slumbers piles the drifty heap!

Think on the dungeon's grim confine,
Where guilt and poor misfortune pine!
Guilt, erring man, relenting view!
But shall thy legal rage pursue
The wretch, already crushed low
By cruel fortune's undeserved blow?
Affliction's sons are brothers in distress,
A brother to relieve, how exquisite the bliss!"

I hear nae mair, for Chanticleer
Shook off the pouthery snaw,
And hailed the morning with a cheer—
A cottage-rousing craw.

But deep this truth impressed my mind—
Through all his works abroad,
The heart benevolent and kind
The most resembles GOD.

"Neither the subjects of his poems," says Wordsworth, speaking of Burns, "nor his manner of handling them, allow us long to forget their author. On the basis of his human character, he has reared a poetic one, which, with more or less distinctness, presents itself to view in almost every part of his earlier, and, in my estimation, his most valuable verses. This poetic fabric, dug out of the quarry of genuine humanity, is airy and spiritual; and though the materials in some parts are coarse, and the disposition is often fantastic and irregular, yet the whole is agreeable and strikingly attractive." The voice which the Poet hears amid the winter storm, utters sentiments in unison with those which the Poet claims as his own in the introduction. He prepares us for sympathizing in the sufferings of the human race by the description of the rivulets choked with snow; the cattle crowding to the shelter of some precipitous bank, and the birds, which cheered him with their songs in summer, sitting chittering among the leafless trees. Elsewhere he sings—

"The birds sit chittering on the thorn,
A' day they dined but sparely."

"This," says Carlyle, "is worth several homilies on mercy, for it is the voice of mercy herself. Burns, indeed, lives in sympathy; his soul rushes forth into all the realms of being: nothing that has existence can be indifferent to him."

THE JOLLY BEGGARS.

A CANTATA.

RECITATIVO.

When lyart leaves bestrow the yird,
Or wavering like the bauckie-bird,
Bedim cauld Boreas' blast;
When hailstanes drive wi' bitter skyte
And infant frosts begin to bite,
In hoary cranreuch drest;
Ae night at e'en a merry core
O' randie, gangrel bodies,
In Posie-Nansie's held the splore,
To drink their orra duddies:
Wi' quaffing and laughing,
They ranted and they sang;
Wi' jumping and thumping,
The vera girdle rang.

First, neist the fire, in auld red rags,
Ane sat, weel brac'd wi' mealy bags,
And knapsack a' in order;
His doxy lay within his arm,
Wi' usquebae an' blankets warm—
She blinkit on her sodger:
An' ay he gies the tozie drab
The tither skelpin' kiss,
While she held up her greedy gab
Just like an awmous dish.
Ilk smack still, did crack still,
Just like a cadger's whip,
Then staggering and swaggering
He roar'd this ditty up—

AIR.

Tune—"*Soldiers' Joy.*"

I am a son of Mars, who have been in many wars,
And show my cuts and scars wherever I come;
This here was for a wench, and that other in a trench,
When welcoming the French at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

My 'prenticeship I past where my leader breath'd his last,
When the bloody die was cast on the hights of Abram;
I serv'd out my trade when the gallant game was play'd,
And the Moro low was laid at the sound of the drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

I lastly was with Curtis, among the floating batt'ries,
And there I left for witness an arm and a limb;
Yet let my country need me, with Elliot to head me,
I'd clatter on my stumps at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

And now tho' I must beg with a wooden arm and leg,
And many a tatter'd rag hanging over my bum,
I'm as happy with my wallet, my bottle and my callet,
As when I us'd in scarlet to follow a drum.
Lal de daudle, &c.

What tho' with hoary locks, I must stand the winter shocks,
Beneath the woods and rocks oftentimes for a home,
When the tother bag I sell, and the tother bottle tell,
I could meet a troop of hell, at the sound of a drum.
Lal de daudle, —&c.

RECITATIVO.

He ended; and the kebars sheuk,
Aboon the chorus roar;
While frighted rattons backward leuk,
And seek the benmost bore;

A fairy fiddler frae the neuk,
He skirl'd out encore !
But up arose the martial chuck,
And laid the loud uproar.

AIR.

Tune—"*Soldier Laddie.*"

I once was a maid, tho' I cannot tell when,
And still my delight is in proper young men ;
Some one of a troop of dragoons was my daddie,
No wonder I'm fond of a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

The first of my loves was a swaggering blade,
To rattle the thundering drum was his trade ;
His leg was so tight, and his cheek was so ruddy,
Transported I was with my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the godly old chaplain left him in the lurch,
The sword I forsook for the sake of the church ;
He ventur'd the soul, and I risk'd the body,
Twas then I prov'd false to my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

Full soon I grew sick of my sanctified sot,
The regiment at large for a husband I got ;
From the gilded spontoon to the fife I was ready,
I asked no more but a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

But the peace it reduc'd me to beg in despair,
Till I met my old boy at a Cunningham fair;
His rags regimental they flutter'd so gaudy,
My heart it rejoic'd at a sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

And now I have liv'd—I know not how long,
And still I can join in a cup and a song ;

But whilst with both hands I can hold the glass steady,
Here's to thee, my hero, my sodger laddie.
Sing, Lal de lal, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Poor Merry Andrew in the neuk,
Sat guzzling wi' a tinkler hizzie;
They mind't na wha the chorus teuk,
Between themselves they were sae busy:
At length wi' drink and courting dizzy,
He stoitered up an' made a face;
Then turn'd, an' laid a smack on Grizzie,
Syne tun'd his pipes wi' grave grimace.

AIR.

Tune—"*Auld Sir Symon.*"

Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou,
Sir Knave is a fool in a session;
He's there but a 'prentice I trow,
But I am a fool by profession.

My grannie she brought me a beuk,
And I held awa to the school;
I fear I my talent misteuk,
But what will ye hae of a fool?

For drink I would venture my neck,
A hizzie's the half o' my craft,
But what could he other expect,
Of ane that's avowedly daft?

I ance was ty'd up like a stirk,
For civilly swearing and quaffing;
I ance was abus'd in the kirk,
For touzling a lass i' my daffin.

Poor Andrew that tumbles for sport,
Let naebody name wi' a jeer;
There's ev'n I'm tauld i' the court
A tumbler ca'd the premier.

Observ'd ye, yon reverend lad
Maks faces to tickle the mob;
He rails at our mountebank squab,
Its rivalship just i' the job.

And now my conclusion I'll tell,
For faith I'm confoundedly dry;
The chiel that's a fool for himsel,
Guide L—d! he's far dafter than I.

RECITATIVO.

Then neist outspak a raucle carlin,
Wha kent fu' weel to cleek the sterling,
For monie a pursie she had hooked,
And had in mony a well been ducked.
Her dove had been a Highland laddie,
But weary fa' the waefu' woodie!
Wi' sighs and sobs she thus began
To wail her braw John Highlandman.

AIR.

Tune—"*O, an' ye were dead, guidman.*"

A Highland lad my love was born,
The Lalland laws he held in scorn;
But he still was faithfu' to his clan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.

CHORUS.

Sing, hey my braw John Highlandman!
Sing, ho my braw John Highlandman!
There's not a lad in a' the lan'
Was match for my John Highlandman.

With his philibeg an' tartan plaid,
An' gude claymore down by his side,
The ladies hearts he did trepan,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

We ranged a' from Tweed to Spey,
An' liv'd like lords and ladies gay;
For a Lalland face he feared none,
My gallant braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

They banish'd him beyond the sea,
But ere the bud was on the tree,
Adown my cheeks the pearls ran,
Embracing my John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

But, oh! they catch'd him at the last,
And bound him in a dungeon fast;
My curse upon them every one,
They've hang'd my braw John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

And now a widow, I must mourn,
The pleasures that will ne'er return;
No comfort but a hearty can,
When I think on John Highlandman.
Sing, hey, &c.

RECITATIVO.

A pigmy scraper, wi' his fiddle,
Wha us'd at trysts and fairs to driddle.
Her strappan limb and gausy middle,
He reach'd na higher.
Had hol'd his heartie like a riddle,
An' blawn't on fire.

Wi' hand on haunch, an' upward e'e,
He croon'd his gamut, one, two, three,
Then in an Arioso key,
The wee Apollo
Set off wi' allegretto glee
His giga solo.

AIR.

Tune—"*Whistle o'er the lave o't.*"

Let me ryke up to dight that tear,
And go wi' me and be my dear,
And then your every care and fear
May whistle owre the lave o't.

CHORUS.

I am a fiddler to my trade,
And a' the tunes that e'er I play'd,
The sweetest still to wife or maid,
Was whistle owre the lave o't.

At kirns and weddings we'se be there,
And O! sae nicely we will fare;
We'll bouse about till Daddie Care
Sings whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

Sae merrily the banes we'll pyke,
And sun oursells about the dyke,
And at our leisure, when ye like,
We'll whistle owre the lave o't.
I am &c.

But bless me wi' your heav'n o' charms,
And while I kittle hair on thairms,
Hunger, cauld, and a' sic harms,
May whistle owre the lave o't.
I am, &c.

RECITATIVO.

Her charms had struck a sturdy caird,
As weel as poor gut-scraper;
He taks the fiddler by the beard,
And draws a roosty rapier—

He swoor by a' was swearing worth,
To speet him like a pliver,
Unless he wad from that time forth
Relinquish her for ever.

Wi' ghastly e'e, poor tweedle-dee
Upon his hunkers bended,
And pray'd for grace wi' ruefu' face,
And sae the quarrel ended.

But tho' his little heart did grieve
When round the tinkler prest her,
He feign'd to snirtle in his sleeve,
When thus the caird address'd her;

AIR.

Tune—"*Clout the caudron.*"

My bonnie lass, I work in brass,
A tinkler is my station:
I've travell'd round all Christian ground
In this my occupation:
I've taen the gold, I've been enroll'd
In many a noble squadron:
But vain they search'd when off I march'd
To go and clout the caudron.
I've taen the gold, &c.

Despise that shrimp, that wither'd imp,
Wi' a' his noise and cap'rin,
And tak a share wi' those that bear
The budget and the apron.
And by that stoup, my faith and houp,
An' by that dear Keilbagie,*
If e'er ye want, or meet wi' scant,
May I ne'er weet my craigie
An' by that stowp, &c.

RECITATIVO.

The caird prevail'd—th' unblushing fair
In his embraces sunk,
Partly wi' love o'ercome sae sair,
An' partly she was drunk.

* A peculiar sort of whiskey.

Sir Violino, with an air
That show'd a man of spunk
Wish'd unison between the pair,
An' made the bottle clunk
To their health that night.

But hurchin Cupid shot a shaft,
That play'd the dame the shavie,
The fiddler * * * * * *
Behind the chicken cavie.
Her lord, a wight o' Homer's craft,
Tho' limping wi' the spavie,
He hirpl'd up, and lap like daft,
And shor'd them Dainty Davie
O boot that night.

He was a care-defying blade
As ever Bacchus listed,
Tho' Fortune sair upon him laid,
His heart she ever miss'd it.
He had nae wish but—to be glad,
Nor want but—when he thirsted;
He hated nought but—to be sad,
And thus the Muse suggested
His sang that night.

AIR.

Tune—"*For a' that, an' a' that.*"

I am a bard of no regard,
Wi' gentle folks, an' a' that:
But Homer-like, the glowran byke,
Frae town to town I draw that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, an' a' that,
An' twice as muckle's a' that;
I've lost but ane, I've twa behin',
I've wife eneugh for a' that.

I never drank the Muses' stank,
Castalia's burn, an' a' that:
But there it streams, and richly reams,
My Helicon I ca' that,
For a' that, &c.

Great love I bear to a' the fair,
Their humble slave, an' a' that;
But lordly will, I hold it still
A mortal sin to thraw that.
For a' that, &c.

In raptures sweet, this hour we meet,
Wi' mutual love, an' a' that:
But for how lang the flee may stang,
Let inclination law that.
For a' that, &c.

Their tricks and craft have put me daft,
They've ta'en me in, and a' that;
But clear your decks, and here's the sex!
I like the jads for a' that.

CHORUS.

For a' that, an' a' that,
An' twice as muckle's a' that;
My dearest bluid, to do them guid,
They're welcome till't for a' that.

RECITATIVO.

So sung the bard—and Nansie's wa's
Shook with a thunder of applause,
Reëcho'd from each mouth:
They toom'd their pocks, an' pawn'd their duds,
They scarcely left to co'er their fuds,
To quench their lowan drouth.
Then owre again, the jovial thrang,
The poet did request,
To loose his pack an' wale a sang,
A ballad o' the best;

He rising, rejoicing,
Between his twa Deborahs,
Looks round him, an' found them
Impatient for the chorus.

AIR.

Tune—"*Jolly Mortals, fill your glasses.*"

See! the smoking bowl before us,
Mark our jovial ragged ring!
Round and round take up the chorus,
And in raptures let us sing.

CHORUS.

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

What is title? what is treasure?
What is reputation's care?
If we lead a life of pleasure,
'Tis no matter how or where!
A fig, &c.

With the ready trick and fable,
Round we wander all the day;
And at night, in barn or stable,
Hug our doxies on the hay.
A fig, &c.

Does the train-attended carriage
Through the country lighter rove?
Does the sober bed of marriage
Witness brighter scenes of love?
A fig, &c.

Life is all a variorum,
We regard not how it goes;
Let them cant about decorum
Who have characters to lose.
A fig, &c.

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets!
Here's to all the wandering train!
Here's our ragged brats and callets!
One and all cry out—Amen!

A fig for those by law protected!
Liberty's a glorious feast!
Courts for cowards were erected,
Churches built to please the priest.

This remarkable poem was written in the year 1785. Burns nowhere mentions it, which has induced some one to surmise that it is not his composition; but the authorship is established beyond doubt. The original manuscript was long in the hands of John Richmond of Mauchline, and he remembers taking the song of "Sir Wisdom's a fool when he's fou" with him to Edinburgh in 1786; it was given by the poet himself to Mr. Woodburn, factor to the laird of Craigengillan, and is now in the possession of Thomas Stewart of Greenock. Other evidence, equally decisive, can be afforded. The song of "For a' that and a' that," sung by the bard, is inserted, with some slight modifications in Johnson's Museum for February, 1790, and Burns is named as the author. But the poem speaks for itself.

Posie Nansie, in whose house the scene is laid, happened to be the mother of Racer Jess, who figures in the "Holy Fair:" her change-house stood in Mauchline, and was the favorite resort of lame sailors, maimed soldiers, wandering tinkers, travelling ballad-singers, and all such loose companions as hang about the skirts of society. Smith, the "slee and pawkie thief" of the Epistle, accompanied Burns into Nansie's howff one night, and saw the scene, which he has rendered immortal.

"The Jolly Beggars," says Sir Walter Scott, "for humorous description and nice discrimination of character, is inferior to no poem of the same length in the whole range of English poetry. The scene, indeed, is laid in the very lowest department of low life, the actors being a set of strolling vagrants, met to carouse and barter their rags and plunder for liquor in a hedge alehouse. Yet, even in describing the movements of such a group, the native taste of the Poet has never suffered his pen to slide into any thing coarse or disgusting. The extravagant glee and outrageous frolic of the beggars are ridiculously contrasted with their maimed limbs, rags and crutches; the sordid and squalid

circumstances of their appearance are judiciously thrown into the shade.

"Nor is the art of the Poet less conspicuous in the individual figures than in the general mass. The festive vagrants are distinguished from each other by personal appearance and character, as much as any fortuitous assembly in the higher orders of life. The group, it must be observed, is of Scottish character: yet the distinctions are too well marked to escape even the southron. The most prominent persons are a maimed soldier and his female companion, a hackneyed follower of the camp; a stroller, late the consort of an Highland ketterer or sturdy beggar,—'but weary fa' the waefu' woodie!' Being now at liberty, she becomes an object of rivalry between a 'pigmy scraper with his fiddle' and a strolling tinker. The latter, a desperate bandit, like most of his profession, terrifies the musician out of the field, and is preferred by the damsel, of course. A wandering ballad-singer, with a brace of doxies, is last introduced upon the stage. Each of these mendicants sing a song in character; and such a collection of humorous lyrics, connected with vivid poetical description, is not, perhaps, to be paralleled in the English language. The concluding ditty, chaunted by the ballad-singer at the request of the company, whose 'mirth and fun have now grown fast and furious,' and set them above all sublunary terrors of jails and whipping-posts, is certainly far superior to any thing in the Beggar's Opera, where alone we could expect to find its parallel."

"Such a motley group of vagrants as Burns has so happily described," observes Cromek, "may yet be found in many districts of Scotland. There are houses of rendezvous where the maimed, supplicating soldier—the travelling, ballad-singing fiddler—the sturdy wench, with hands ever ready to steal the pittance which is not bestowed—the rough, black-bearded tinker, with his soldering-irons and pike-staff—and other children of real or pretended misfortune, assemble on a Saturday night to pawn their stolen clothes, dispose of their begged meal, and on their produce to hold merriment and revelry." One of that sturdy class of mendicants, so well painted by both poet and annotator, is still remembered in Nithsdale by the name of "Auld Penpont." This provincial worthy was a fellow of infinite drollery and rustic talent: he had a grave speech for the serious—could sing a psalm or pray upon occasion with the devout; but when he met with the young and the thoughtless, he was another man. He told wild stories, chaunted wilder songs and sometimes laid his wallets aside and performed a sort of rustic interlude, called "Auld Glenae," with no little spirit and feeling.

DEATH AND DR. HORNBOOK.

A TRUE STORY.

Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers, they ha'e been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid, at times, to vend,
And nail't wi' Scripture.

But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befel,
Is just as true's the Deil's in h-ll
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel
'S a muckle pity.

The Clachan yill had made me canty,
I was na fou, but just had plenty;
I stacher'd whyles but yet took tent ay
To free the ditches;
An' hillocks, stanes, and bushes, kenn'd ay
Fra ghaists an' witches.

The rising moon began to glow'r,
The distant Cumnock hills out-owre:
To count her horns, wi' a' my pow'r,
I set mysel;
But whether she had three or four,
I cou'd na tell.

I was come round about the hill,
And todlin down on Willie's mill,
Setting my staff wi' a' my skill,
To keep me sicker;
Tho' leeward whyles, against my will,
I took a bicker.

I there wi' something did forgather,
That put me in an eerie swither;
An awfu' scythe, out-owre ae shouther,
Clear-dangling, hang;
A three-taed leister on the ither
Lay, large an' lang.

Its stature seem'd lang Scotch ells twa,
The queerest shape that e'er I saw,
For fient a wame it had ava;
And then, its shanks,
They were as thin, as sharp an' sma'
As cheeks o' branks.

"Guid-een," quo' I; "Friend! hae ye been mawin,
When ither folk are busy sawin?"
It seem'd to mak a kind o' stan',
But naething spak;
At length, says I, "Friend, whare ye gaun,
Will ye go back?"

It spak right howe,—"My name is Death,
But be na' fley'd."—Quoth I, "Guid faith,
Ye're may be come to stap my breath;
But tent me billie:
I red ye weel, take care o' skaith,
See, there's a gully!"

"Guidman," quo' he, "put up your whittle,
I'm no design'd to try its mettle;
But if I did, I wad be kittle
To be mislear'd,
I wad na mind it, no, that spittle
Out-owre my beard."

"Weel, weel!" says I, "a bargain be't;
Come, gies your hand, an' sae we're gree't;
We'll ease our shanks an' tak a seat,
Come, gies your news;
This while ye hae been mony a gate,
At mony a house.

"Ay, 'ay!" quo' he, an' shook his head,
"It's e'en a lang, lang time indeed
Sin I began to nick the thread,
An' choke the breath:
Folk maun do something for their bread,
An' sae maun death.

"Sax thousand years are near hand fled
Sin' I was to the butching bred,
An' mony a scheme in vain's been laid,
To stap or scar me;
Till ane Hornbook's ta'en up the trade,
An' faith, he'll waur me.

"Ye ken Jock Hornbook i' the Clachan,
Deil mak his king's-hood in a spleuchan!
He's grown sae well acquaint wi' Buchan*
An' ither chaps,
The weans haud out their fingers laughin'
An pouk my hips.

"See, here's a scythe, and there's a dart,
They hae pierc'd mony a gallant heart;
But Dr. Hornbook, wi' his art
And cursed skill,
Has made them baith no worth a f—t,
Damn'd haet they'll kill.

"T'was but yestreen, nae farther gaen,
I threw a noble throw at ane;
Wi' less, I'm sure, I've hundreds slain;
But-deil-ma-care,
It just play'd dirl on the bane,
But did nae mair.

"Hornbook was by, wi' ready art,
And had sae fortified the part,
That when I looked to my dart,
It was sae blunt,
Fient haet o't wad hae pierc'd the heart
Of a kail-runt.

* Buchan's Domestic Medicine.

"I drew my scythe in sic a fury,
I nearhand cowpit wi' my hurry,
But yet the bauld Apothecary
Withstood the shock;
I might as weel hae tried a quarry
O' hard whin rock.

"Ev'n them he canna get attended,
Although their face he ne'er had kend it,
Just —— in a kail-blade, and send it,
As soon he smells't,
Baith their disease, and what will mend it,
At once he tells't.

"And then a' doctor's saws and whittles,
Of a' dimensions, shapes, an' mettles,
A' kinds o' boxes, mugs, an' bottles,
He's sure to hae;
Their Latin names as fast he rattles
As A B C.

"Calces o' fossils, earths, and trees;
True sal-marinum o' the seas;
The farina of beans and pease,
He has't in plenty;
Aqua-fontis, what you please,
He can content ye.

"Forbye some new, uncommon weapons,
Urinus spiritus of capons;
Or mite-horn shavings, filings, scrapings,
Distill'd *per se*;
Sal-alkali o' midge-tail clippings,
And mony mae."

"Waes me for Johnny Ged's hole* now,"
Quo' I, "If that thae news be true!
His braw calf-ward whare gowans grew,
Sae white and bonnie,
Nae doubt they'll rive it wi' the plew;
They'll ruin Johnnie!"

* The grave-digger.

The creature grain'd an eldritch laugh,
And says "Ye need na yoke the pleugh,
Kirkyards will soon be till'd eneugh,
Tak ye na fear:
They'll a' be trench'd wi' mony a sheugh
In twa-three year.

"Whare I kill'd ane a fair strae death,
By loss o' blood or want of breath,
This night I'm free to tak my aith,
That Hornbook's skill
Has clad a score i' their last claith,
By drap an' pill.

"An honest wabster to his trade,
Whase wife's twa nieves were scarce weel bred,
Gat tippence-worth to mend her head,
When it was sair;
The wife slade cannie to her bed
But ne'er spak mair.

"A countra laird had ta'en the batts,
Or some curmurring in his guts,
His only son for Hornbook sets,
An' pays him well.
The lad, for twa guid gimmer-pets,
Was laird himsel.

"A bonnie lass, ye kend her name,
Some ill-brewn drink had hov'd her wame;
She trusts hersel, to hide the shame,
In Hornbook's care;
Horn sent her aff to her lang hame,
To hide it there.

"That's just a swatch o' Hornbook's way;
Thus goes he on from day to day,
Thus does he poison, kill, an' slay,
An's weel paid for't;
Yet stops me o' my lawfu' prey,
Wi' his d–mn'd dirt:

"But hark! I'll tell you of a plot,
Though dinna ye be speaking o't;
I'll nail the self-conceited sot,
As dead's a herrin':
Niest time we meet, I'll wad a groat,
He gets his fairin'!"

But just as he began to tell,
The auld kirk-hammer strak' the bell
Some wee short hour ayont the twal,
Which rais'd us baith:
I took the way that pleas'd mysel,
And sae did Death.

This poem—a fine mixture of fancy and humor—was thought too personal for the Kilmarnock edition; but when success rendered the poet bolder, he printed it in the subscription volume of 1787, with notes intimating the object of the satire.—"This gentleman, Dr. Hornbook," said Burns, "is professionally a brother of the sovereign order of the ferula, bat, by intuition and inspiration, he is at once apothecary, surgeon, and physician." In a note to the copy of his works presented to Dr. Geddes, the Poet says the hero of the poem is "John Wilson, schoolmaster, in Tarbolton." Of the person raised to this painful eminence Gilbert Burns says, "To eke out the scanty subsistence allowed to his useful class he set up a shop of grocery goods. Having accidentally fallen in with some medical books, and become most hobby-horsically attached to the study of medicine, he had added the sale of a few medicines to his little trade. He had got a shop-bill printed, at the bottom of which, overlooking his own incapacity, he had advertised that advice would be given in common disorders, at the shop gratis. Robert was at a mason-meeting in Tarbolton, when the Dominie made too ostentatious a display of his medical skill. As he parted in the evening from this mixture of pedantry and physic, at the place where he describes his meeting with Death, one of those floating ideas of apparitions mentioned in his letter to Dr. Moore, crossed his mind: this set him to work for the rest of his way home. These circumstances he related when he repeated the verses to me next afternoon, as I was holding the plough, and he was letting the water off the field beside me."

The tradition of the neighbourhood supplies a few particulars.

On his way home, it is said, the Poet found a neighbour lying tipsy by the road-side: the idea of death flashed on his fancy, and seating himself on the parapet of the bridge, he composed the poem, fell aslsep, and when awakened by the morning sun, he recollected it all, and wrote it down on reaching Mossgiel.

This took place in the seed-season of 1785, and an epidemical disorder was then raging in the country. Wilson soon afterwards quitted Tarbolton, and repairing to Glasgow engaged in mercantile pursuits, and achieved a moderate independence. He lives much respected for his religious feelings and his private worth.—"At Glasgow," says Cromek, in one of his interesting notes on Burns now before me, "I heard that the hero of this exquisite satire was living: Hamilton managed to introduce me to him—we talked of almost all subjects save the poems of Burns. Dr. Hornbook is above the middle size, stout made, and inclining to corpulency. His complexion is swarthy, his eye black and expressive: he wears a brown wig and dresses in black. There is little or nothing of the pedant about him: I think a man who had never read the poem would scarcely discover any. Burns, I am told, had no personal enmity to Wilson." Some will smile at the minute things remembered: the "bonnie lass," who suffered from ill-brewn drink, was an innkeeper's daughter: and the wife, whose "neives were scarce weel bred," was spouse to a westlin weaver.

"When Burns wrote," says Wordsworth, "his story of 'Death and Dr. Hornbook,' he had very rarely been intoxicated, or perhaps much exhilarated by liquor. Yet how happily does he lead his reader into that track of sensations! and with what lively humor does he describe the disorder of his senses and the confusion of his understanding, put to test by his deliberate attempt to count the horns of the moon!—

> 'But whether she had three or four
> He couldna tell.'

Behold a sudden apparition which disperses this disorder, and in a moment chills him into possession of himself! Coming upon no more important mission than the grisly phantom was charged with, what mode of introduction could have been more efficient or appropriate?"

My friend, Robert Chambers, has enabled me to complete the memoranda illustrative of this singular poem.—"In the neighbourhood of Tarbolton is situated the farm of Lochlea, where the Poet lived, as a humble denizen of his father's household, from the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth year of his age. This, of course, was the clachan to which at that period he re-

sorted for the pleasures of society. He formed here, in 1780, a club of young men, who met monthly for mutual improvement and entertainment, and of which he and his brother poet, David Sillar, were the leading members: the utmost extent of expenditure on any night was three-pence. Here, also, was a lodge of freemasons, which he delighted to attend, and to whom he wrote a farewell, incorporated in his poems. The lodge still exists, and possesses among its records many letters from Burns, some written long after he was locally dissevered from the association, but still breathing an intense interest in its concerns. It was after attending a meeting of this lodge that he wrote his poem entitled 'Death and Doctor Hornbook,' the object of which was to burlesque the schoolmaster, who had offended him that night in the course of argument."

THE KIRK'S ALARM:*

A SATIRE.

Orthodox, orthodox,
Wha believe in John Knox,
Let me sound an alarm to your conscience;
There's a heretic blast
Has been blawn in the wast,
That what is no sense must be nonsense.

Dr. Mac,† Dr. Mac,
You should stretch on a rack,
To strike evil doers wi' terror;
To join faith and sense
Upon ony pretence,
Is heretic, damnable error.

Town of Ayr, town of Ayr,
It was mad I declare,
To meddle wi' mischief a-brewing;

* This poem was written a short time after the publication of Dr. M'Gill's Essay.

† Mr. M'Gill.

Provost John is still deaf
To the church's relief,
And orator Bob* is its ruin.

D'rymple mild,† D'rymple mild,
Tho' your heart's like a child,
And your life like the new driven snaw,
Yet that winna save ye,
Auld Satan must have ye,
For preaching that three's ane an' twa.

Rumble John,‡ Rumble John,
Mount the steps wi' a groan,
Cry the book is wi' heresy cramm'd;
Then lug out your ladle,
Deal brimstone like adle,
And roar every note of the damn'd.

Simper James,§ Simper James,
Leave the fair Killie dames,
There's a holier chace in your view;
I'll lay on your head,
That the pack ye'll soon lead,
For puppies like you there's but few.

Singet Sawney,‖ Singet Sawney,
Are ye herding the penny,
Unconscious what evil await;
Wi' a jump, yell, and howl,
Alarm every soul,
For the foul thief is just at your gate.

Daddy Auld,¶ Daddy Auld,
There's a tod in the fauld,
A tod meikle waur than the clerk;
Though ye can do little skaith,
Ye'll be in at the death,
And gif ye canna bite, ye may bark.

* Robert Aiken. † Dr. Dalrymple. ‡ Mr. Russell.
§ Mr. M'Kinlay. ‖ Mr. Moodie. ¶ Mr. Auld.

Davie Bluster,* Davie Bluster,
If for a saint ye do muster,
The corps is no nice of recruits;
Yet to worth let's be just,
Royal blood ye might boast,
If the ass was the king of the brutes.

Jamy Goose,† Jamy Goose,
Ye ha'e made but toom roose,
In hunting the wicked lieutenant;
But the Doctor's your mark,
For the L—d's haly ark;
He has cooper'd and cawd a wrong pin in't.

Poet Willie,‡ Poet Willie,
Gie the Doctor a volley,
Wi' your liberty's chain and your wit;
O'er Pegasus' side
Ye ne'er laid a stride,
Ye but smelt, man, the place where he s—t.

Andro Gouk,§ Andro Gouk,
Ye may slander the book,
And the book not the waur, let me tell ye;
Ye are rich, and look big,
But lay by hat and wig,
And ye'll ha'e a calf's head o' sma' value.

Barr Steenie,‖ Barr Steenie,
What mean ye, what mean ye?
If ye'll meddle nae mair wi' the matter,
Ye may ha'e some pretence
To havins and sense,
Wi' people wha ken ye nae better.

Irvine side,¶ Irvine side,
Wi' your turkey-cock pride,
Of manhood but sma' is your share,

* Mr. G——, O——. † Mr. Young. ‡ Mr. Peebles, Ayr.
§ Dr. A. M——ll. ‖ Mr. S—n Y——, B—r. ¶ Mr. S—h, G——.

Ye've the figure, 'tis true,
Even your faes will allow,
And your friends they dare grant you nae mair.

Muirland Jock,* Muirland Jock,
When the L—d makes a rock
To crush Common Sense for her sins,
If ill manners were wit,
There's no mortal so fit
To confound the poor Doctor at ance.

Holy Will,† Holy Will,
There was wit i' your skull,
When ye pilfer'd the alms o' the poor;
The timmer is scant,
When ye're ta'en for a saint,
Wha should swing in a rape for an hour.

Calvin's sons, Calvin's sons,
Seize your spir'tual guns,
Ammunition you never can need;
Your hearts are the stuff,
Will be powther enough,
And your skulls are storehouses o' lead.

Poet Burns, Poet Burns,
Wi' your priest-skelping turns,
Why desert ye your auld native shire?
Your muse is a gipsie,
E'en tho' she were tipsie,
She could ca' us nae waur than we are.

The history of the "Kirk's Alarm" is curious:—"Macgill and Dalrymple," says Lockhart, "the two ministers of the town of Ayr, had long been suspected of entertaining heterodox opinions on several points, particularly the doctrine of Original Sin and the Trinity; and the former at length published an essay, which was considered as demanding the notice of the church courts. More than a year was spent in the discussions

* Mr. S——d. † An Elder in Mauchline.

which arose out of this: and at last Dr. Macgill was fain to acknowledge his errors, and promise that he would take an early opportunity of apologizing for them to his congregation from the pulpit, which promise, however, he never performed. The gentry of the country took, for the most part, the side of Macgill, who was a man of cold, unpopular manners, but of unreproached moral character, and possessed of some accomplishments, though certainly not of distinguished talents. The bulk of the lower orders espoused with far more fervid zeal the cause of those who conducted the prosecution against this erring doctor. Gavin Hamilton, and all persons of his stamp, were, of course, on the side of Macgill—Auld and the Mauchline elders, with his enemies. Robert Aiken, a writer in Ayr, a man of remarkable talents, particularly in public speaking, had the principal management of Macgill's cause before the Presbytery, and, I believe, also before the Synod. He was an intimate friend of Hamilton, and through him had about this time formed an acquaintance which soon ripened into a warm friendship with Burns. Burns was, therefore, from the beginning, a zealous, as in the end he was, perhaps, the most effective partisan of the side on which Aiken had staked so much of his reputation."

The eloquence of Aiken and the wit of Hamilton were deeply felt and resented by the partisans of the Old Light. The hue and cry against the latter drew these words of condolence from Burns:—"You have erred—you have committed the blasphemous heresies of squaring religion by the rules of common sense, and attempting to give a consistent character to Almighty God, and a rational account of his proceedings with the sons of men."—"Mr. Hamilton," says Chambers, "lived in a half-fortified old mansion near the church, forming the only remains of the ancient priory. He was the son of a gentleman who had practised the same profession in the same place, and was in every respect, a most estimable member of society—generous, affable, and humane. Unfortunately, his religious practice did not square with the notions of the then minister of Mauchline, the 'Daddy Auld' of Burns' Poems, who, in 1785, is found in the session-records to have summoned him for rebuke, on the four following charges:—1. Unnecessary absence from church, for five consecutive Sundays; 2. Setting out on a journey to Carrick on a Sunday; 3. Habitual, if not total, neglect of family worship; 4. Writing an abusive letter to the session in reference to some of their former proceedings respecting him. Strange though this prosecution may seem, it was strictly accordant with the right assumed by clergymen at that period to

inquire into the private habits of parishioners." The Poet speaks of his own "priest-skelping turns;" probably he alludes rather to what he said, than what he wrote.—"Polemical divinity," he says, when speaking of this period to Dr. Moore, "was putting the country half-mad, and I, ambitious of shining in conversation parties on Sundays, at funerals, &c., used to puzzle Calvinism with so much heat and indiscretion, that I raised the hue and cry of heresy against me, which has not ceased to this hour." Nor has it yet subsided.—"His morals, sir," said a peasant of the land of Burns to an anxious inquirer, "werena very gude; and as for religion, I'll uphaud he was a rank Unitarian." Some of the names of the persons in this satiric drama are printed in full in the notes; others are purposely left in obscurity.

THE TWA HERDS;

OR,

THE HOLY TULZIE.

O' a' ye pious godly flocks,
Weel fed on pastures orthodox,
Wha now will keep you frae the fox,
Or worrying tykes,
Or wha will tent the waifs and crocks,
About the dykes?

The twa best herds in a' the wast,
That e'er ga'e gospel horn a blast,
These five and twenty simmers past,
O! dool to tell,
Ha'e had a bitter black out-cast
Atween themsel.

O, Moodie, man, and wordy Russell,
How could you raise so vile a bustle,
Ye'll see how New-Light herds will whistle,
And think it fine:
The Lord's cause ne'er got sic a twistle
Sin, I ha'e min'.

O, sirs! whae'er wad ha'e expeckit
Your duty ye wad sae negleckit,
Ye wha were ne'er by lairds respeckit,
To wear the plaid,
But by the brutes themselves eleckit,
To be their guide.

What flock wi' Moodie's flock could rank,
Sae hale and hearty every shank,
Nae poison'd sour Arminian stank,
He let them taste,
Frae Calvin's well, ay clear they drank,—
O sic a feast!

The thummart, wil'-cat, brock, and tod,
Weel kend his voice thro' a' the wood,
He smelt their ilka hole and road,
Baith out and in,
And weel he lik'd to shed their bluid,
And sell their skin.

What herd like Russell tell'd his tale,
His voice was heard thro' muir and dale,
He kend the Lord's sheep, ilka tail,
O'er a' the height,
And saw gin they were sick or hale,
At the first sight.

He fine a mangy sheep could scrub,
Or nobly fling the gospel club,
And New-Light herds could nicely drub,
Or pay their skin;
Could shake them o'er the burning dub,
Or heave them in.

Sic twa—O! do I live to see't,
Sic famous twa should disagreet,
An' names, like villain, hypocrite,
Ilk ither gi'en,
While new New-Light herds, wi' laughin' spite,
Say neither's liein'!

A' ye wha tent the gospell faud,
There's D——n, deep, and Peebles, shaul,
But chiefly thou, apostle Auld,
We trust in thee,
That thou wilt work them, hot and cauld,
Till they agree.

Consider, Sirs, how we're beset;
There's scarce a new herd that we get
But comes frae 'mang that cursed set
I winna name;
I hope frae heav'n to see them yet
In fiery flame.

Dalrymple has been lang our fae,
M'Gill has wrought us meikle wae,
And that curs'd rascal ca'd M'—e,
And baith the Shaws,
That aft ha'e made us black and blae,
Wi' vengefu' paws.

Auld W—w lang has hatch'd mischief,
We thought ay death wad bring relief,
But he has gotten, to our grief,
Ane to succeed him,
A chield wha'll soundly buff our beef;
I meikle dread him.

And mony a ane that I could tell,
Wha fain would openly rebel,
Forbye turn-coats amang oursel,
There's Smith for ane,
I doubt he's but a grey-nick quill,
And that ye'll fin'.

O! a' ye flocks o'er a' the hills,
By mosses, meadows, moors, and fells,
Come, join your counsel and your skills
To cow the lairds,
And get the brutes the powers themsels
To choose their herds.

Then Orthodoxy yet may prance,
And Learning in a woody dance,
And that fell cur ca'd Common Sense,
That bites sae sair,
Be banish'd o'er the sea to France:
Let him bark there.

Then Shaw's and Dalrymple's eloquence,
M'Gill's close nervous excellence,
M'—e's pathetic manly sense,
And guid M'Math,
Wi' Smith, wha thro' the heart can glance,
May a' pack aff.

"The first of my poetic offspring that saw the light," says Burns to Dr. Moore, "was a burlesque lamentation on a quarrel between two reverend Calvinists, both of them *dramatis personæ* in my 'Holy Fair.' I had a notion myself that the piece had some merit; but to prevent the worst, I gave a copy of it to a friend who was very fond of such things, and told him I could not guess who was the author of it, but that I thought it pretty clear. With a certain description of the clergy, as well as laity, it met with a roar of applause." The actors in this indecent drama were—Moodie, Minister of Riccartoun, and Russell, helper to the Minister of Kilmarnock, who afterwards had a harmonious call to Stirling. They were apostles of the Old Light, but this did not hinder controversy, and whilst indulging in a discussion on Effectual Calling, on their way home from the Monday sermon of a Sacrament, they quarrelled by the way, and, as some assert, proceeded to blows. The first intimation which the world of Kyle had of this "bitter black outcast," was from Russell himself, who was seen approaching the house of Barlieth at full gallop.—"Wha can this be riding in sic a daft-like manner?" exclaimed one.—"It's awfu' like our ain Minister, honest man;" said another.—"That can never be," said John Parker, a decorous man and an elder—"and yet it's him. Na, I'll no believe my ain een!" The doubts of his elder were cut short by the Minister himself halting, and explaining the cause of his galloping. On inquiring long afterwards of a person who was present with Parker what Russell said, he replied that he heard him say something about the unsound doctrine

of Moodie; how hot words ensued, and he was obliged to give his brother's horse a crack across the nose to put it and its rider back.—"But ye wadna believe me now, if I were to tell you that I think he missed the horse, and hit the Minister. Black Russell was na sparing!"

These satiric sallies were not unavenged by the children of the Old Light. They called Burns unbeliever, profane scoffer, and ungodly rhymer—epithets of influence in those days: and they moreover represented, that the Bachelor's Club of Mauchline, where the Poet presided, met for other than moral purposes. Their language was reported as loose, their toasts indecorous, and one of the elders, it is said, having caught up two or three wild stanzas scattered by Burns at one of those mirthful meetings, kept repeating them wherever he went, saying, at the end of every verse, "Oh, what a wild lad! A lost sheep—a lost sheep!"

HOLY WILLIE'S PRAYER.

O Thou, wha in the heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thysel,
Sends ane to heaven, and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony gude or ill
They've done afore thee!

I bless and praise thy matchless might,
Whan thousands thou hast left in night,
That I am here afore thy sight
For gifts and grace,
A burnin' and a shinin' light
To a' this place.

What was I, or my generation,
That I should get sic exaltation,
I wha deserve sic just damnation,
For broken laws,
Five thousand years 'fore my creation,
Thro' Adam's cause.

When frae my mither's womb I fell,
Thou might hae plunged me in hell,
To gnash my gums, to weep and wail,
In burnin' lake,
Whar damned devils roar and yell,
Chain'd to a stake.

Yet I am here a chosen sample;
To show thy grace is great and ample;
I'm here a pillar in thy temple,
Strong as a rock,
A guide, a buckler, an example,
To a' thy flock.

But yet, O L——d! confess I must,
At times I'm fash'd wi' fleshly lust;
And sometimes, too, wi' warldly trust,
Vile self gets in;
But thou remembers we are dust,
Defil'd in sin.

Besides, I farther maun allow,
Wi' Lizzie's lass, three times I trow—
But L—d, that Friday I was fou,
When I came near her,
Or else, thou kens, thy servant true
Wad ne'er hae steer'd her.

Maybe thou lets this fleshly thorn,
Beset thy servant e'en and morn,
Lest he owre high and proud should turn,
'Cause he's sae gifted;
If sae, thy han' maun e'en be borne,
Until thou lift it.

L—d, bless thy chosen in this place,
For here thou hast a chosen race:
But G—d confound their stubborn face,
And blast their name,
Wha bring thy elders to disgrace
And public shame.

L—d, mind Gawn Hamilton's deserts,
He drinks, and swears, and plays at carts,
Yet has sae mony takin' arts,
Wi' grit an' sma',
Frae G—d's ain priests the people's hearts
He steals awa.

An' whan we chasten'd him therefore,
Thou kens how he bred sic a splore,
As set the warld in sic a roar
O' laughin' at us ;—
Curse thou his basket and his store,
Kail and potatoes.

L—d, hear my earnest cry and pray'r,
Against the presbyt'ry of Ayr ;
Thy strong right hand, L—d, mak it bear
Upo' their heads,
L—d weigh it down, and dinna spare,
For their misdeeds.

O L—d my G—d, that glib-tongu'd Aiken,
My very heart and saul are quakin',
To think how we stood groanin', shakin',
An swat wi' dread,
While he wi' hingin lips and snakin',
Held up his head.

L—d, in the day of vengeance try him,
L—d, visit them wha did employ him,
And pass not in thy mercy by 'em,
Nor hear their pray'r ;
But for thy people's sake destroy 'em,
And dinna spare.

But, L—d, remember me and mine,
Wi' mercies temp'ral and divine,
That I for gear and grace may shine,
Excell'd by nane,
And a' the glory shall be thine,
Amen, Amen!

EPITAPH ON HOLY WILLIE.

HERE Holy Willie's sair worn clay
Taks up its last abode;
His saul has ta'en some other way,
I fear the left-hand road.

Stop! there he is, as sure's a gun,
Poor, silly body, see him;
Nae wonder he's as black's the grun,
Observe wha's standing wi' him.

Your brunstane devilship, I see,
Has got him there before ye;
But haud your nine-tail cat a wee,
Till ance you've heard my story.

Your pity I will not implore,
For pity ye hae nane;
Justice, alas! has gi'en him o'er,
And mercy's day is gaen.

But hear me, sir, deil as ye are,
Look something to your credit;
A coof like him would stain your name,
If it were kent ye did it.

The "Holy Willie" of this sarcastic but too daring poem, was one William Fisher, a farmer near Mauchline, and leading Elder of the Reverend Mr. Auld's Session. He was a great pretender to sanctity, austere of speech, and punctilious about outward observances. Yet he was by no means rigid as far as regarded himself: he scrupled not to "get fou," when whiskey flowed at the expense of others: he was more particular, too, in the examination of female transgressors than some of his brethren thought was seemly; and when he left Mauchline for an eldership in a neighbouring parish he had a sore fall, for it is said he made free with the money of the poor. Burns prophetically intimates Willie's leaning to the latter vice:—

"And sometimes, too, wi' warldly trust
Vile self gets in."

His end was any thing but godly: he drank more than was proper during one of his visits to Mauchline, and was found dead in a ditch on the way to his own house.

Burns loved to give vent to his satiric propensities in prayers such as that uttered by "Holy Willie." On one occasion a friend of his had aided in the summary punishment—sanctioned by old custom—of a girl belonging to an innkeeper, who had been too indulgent to one of the male customers. The law was angry, and the aggressor fled to the woods, but returned to his father's house late on Saturday night, knowing that he was free on the Sabbath. He met Burns on one of these occasions, and related his story: the Poet laughed—mused a little, and said, "Adam, you have much need of some one to pray for you,"—"I wish you would do it, Robert," said the other, "I know no one so fit." Burns immediately composed a prayer, of which some stanzas are still remembered;—it is explanation sufficient to say that "Geordie" and "Nanse" were the girl's master and mistress, and chief instigators of the prosecution. He commences by making his friend complain of "scrimpit stature," and of bodily inability to endure the hornings and houndings of law: he then describes his privations and fears:—

"And now I'm derned in glens and hallows,
And hunted, as was William Wallace'
By constables, those blackguard fallows,
And bailies baith:
The Lord preserve us frae the gallows,
That cursed death!"

He next demands vengeance on his persecutors:—

"Auld, grim, black-bearded Geordie's sel,
O! shake him owre the mouth o' hell,
And let him hing, and roar and yell,
Wi' hideous din:
An', if he offers to rebel,
Just heave him in.

"When Death comes in, wi' glimmering blink,
And tips auld drunken Nanse the wink,
May Hornie gie her doup a clink
Ahint his yett,
And fill her up wi' brimstone drink,
Red reeking het!"

John Richmond of Mauchline says, that when he was a clerk in Gavin Hamilton's office, Burns came in one morning and said, "I have just been making a poem, and if you will write it, John,

I'll repeat it." He accordingly, to Richmond's surprise, repeated "Holy Willie's Prayer;" Hamilton came in, read it, and ran laughing with it to Robert Aiken—and Aiken was delighted.

THE INVENTORY;

IN ANSWER TO A MANDATE BY THE SURVEYOR OF THE TAXES.

SIR, as your mandate did request,
I send you here a faithfu' list,
O' gudes an' gear, an' a' my graith,
To which I'm clear to gi'e my aith.

Imprimis, then, for carriage cattle,
I have four brutes o' gallant mettle,
As ever drew afore a pettle.
My lan'-afore's* a gude auld has-been,
An' wight an' wilfu' a' his days been.
My lan'-ahin's† a weel gaun fillie,
That aft has born me hame frae Killie,‡
An' your auld burro' mony a time,
In days when riding was nae crime—
But ance, whan in my wooing pride,
I like a blockhead boost to ride,
The wilfu' creature sae I pat to,
(L—d pardon a' my sins an' that too!)
I play'd my fillie sic a shavie,
She's a' bedevil'd with the spavie.
My fur-ahin's§ a wordy beast,
As e'er in tug or tow was traced.
The fourth's a Highland Donald hastie,
A d—n'd red wud Kilburnie blastie!

* The fore-horse on the left-hand in the plough,
† The hindmost horse on the left-hand in the plough,
‡ Kilmarnock.
§ The hindmost horse on the right-hand in the plough.

Forbye a cowt o' cowt's the wale,
As ever ran afore a tail.
If he be spar'd to be a beast,
He'll draw me fifteen pun' at least—
Wheel carriages I ha'e but few,
Three carts, an' twa are feckly new;
Ae auld wheelbarrow, mair for token,
Ae leg an' baith the trams are broken;
I made a poker o' the spin'le,
An' my auld mither brunt the trin'le.

For men, I've three mischievous boys,
Run de'ils for rantin' an' for noise;
A gaudsman ane, a thrasher t'other,
Wee Davock hauds the nowt in fother.
I rule them as I ought, discreetly,
An' aften labor them completely;
An' ay on Sundays duly, nightly,
I on the questions targe them tightly;
Till, faith, wee Davock's turn'd sae gleg,
Tho' scarcely longer than your leg,
He'll screed you aff Effectual Calling,
As fast as ony in the dwalling.
I've nane in female servan' station,
(L—d keep me ay frae a' temptation!)
I ha'e nae wife—and that my bliss is,
An' ye have laid na tax on misses;
An' then, if kirk folks dinna clutch me
I ken the devils dare nae touch me.
Wi' weans I'm mair than weel contented,
Heav'n sent me ane mae than I wanted.
My sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess,
She stares her daddy in the face,
Enough of aught ye like but grace;
But her, my bonnie sweet wee lady,
I've paid enough for her already,
An' gin ye tax her or her mither,
B' the L—d! ye'se get them a' thegither.

And now, remember, Mr. Aiken,
Nae kind of license out I'm takin';
Thro' dirt and dub for life I'll paidle,
Ere I sae dear pay for a saddle;
My travel a' on foot I'll shank it,
I've sturdy bearers, Gude be thankit.
Sae dinna put me in your buke,
Nor for my ten white shillings luke.

This list wi' my ain hand I've wrote it,
The day and date as under noted;
Then know ye all whom it concerns,
Subscripsi huic ROBERT BURNS.

These lines were written in answer to a mandate sent by the surveyor of the windows, carriages, &c. to each farmer, ordering him to send a signed list of his horses, servants, wheel-carriages, &c., and whether he was a married man or a bachelor, likewise the number of his children. The poem is chiefly remarkable for the information which it gives concerning the farm, the household, and the habits of Burns. Mossgiel lies a short mile distant from Mauchline; nor has cultivation prevailed against the cold clay-bottom which, with untimely rains, brought ruin to the poet's labors: it is, I have been informed, more suitable for grazing than cropping, and at this period produces excellent cheese. "Mauchline," says the correct and lively Chambers, "is a parish town of above a thousand inhabitants, in ancient times the seat of a Priory belonging to Melrose, but now differing in no respect from a common agricultural village. It is situated upon a slope ascending from the margin of the Ayr, from which it is about two miles distant. One might at first suppose that a rustic population like that of Mauchline would form but a poor field for the descriptive and satirical genius of Burns. It is wondrous, however, how variously original many of the inhabitants of the most ordinary Scotch village will contrive to be. In a small town the character of every man is well known, so that every thing he says or does appears to his fellows as characteristic.' Fife has supplied Wilkie—and long may it continue to supply my friend—with original characters: Ayrshire afforded Burns all his most natural portraits; the more sequestered places of Scotland abound with originality. In one pastoral vale, if you find eighty people, you may say you have found sixty original characters.

THE HOLY FAIR.

"A robe of seeming truth and trust
Hid crafty observation;
And secret hung, with poison'd crust,
The dirk of Defamation:
A mask that like the gorget show'd,
Dye-varying on the pigeon;
And for a mantle large and broad,
He wrapt him in Religion."
HYPOCRISY A-LA-MODE.

UPON a simmer Sunday morn,
When Nature's face is fair,
I walked forth to view the corn,
An' snuff the caller air.
The rising sun owre Galston muirs,
Wi' glorious light was glintin';
The hares were hirplin down the furs,
The lav'rocks they were chantin'
Fu' sweet that day.

As lightsomely I glow'r'd abroad,
To see a scene sae gay,
Three hizzies, early at the road,
Cam skelpin' up the way,
Twa had manteeles o' dolefu' black,
But ane wi' lyart lining;
The third, that gaed a-wee a-back,
Was in the fashion shining,
Fu' gay that day.

The twa appear'd like sisters twin,
In feature, form, an' claes;
Their visage wither'd, lang, an' thin,
An' sour as any slaes:
The third cam up, hap-step-an'-lowp,
As light as ony lambie,
An' wi' a curchie low did stoop,
As soon as e'er she saw me,
Fu' kind that day.

Wi' bonnet aff, quoth I, "Sweet lass,
I think ye seem to ken me;
I'm sure I've seen that bonnie face,
But yet I canna name ye."
Quo' she, an' laughin' as she spak,
An' taks me by the hands,
"Ye, for my sake, hae gi'en the feck,
Of a' the ten commands
A screed some day.

"My name is Fun—your cronie dear,
The nearest friend ye hae;
An' this is Superstition here,
An' that's Hypocrisy.
I'm gaun to Mauchline holy fair,
To spend an hour in daffin:
Gin ye'll go there, yon runkl'd pair,
We will get famous laughin'
At them this day."

Quoth I, "With a' my heart, I'll do't;
I'll get my Sunday's sark on,
An' meet you on the holy spot;
Faith we'se hae fine remarkin'!"
Then I gaed hame at crowdie-time
An' soon I made me ready;
For roads were clad, frae side to side,
Wi' mony a wearie body,
In droves that day.

Here farmers gash in ridin' graith
Gaed hoddin by their cottars;
There, swankies young, in braw braid-claith,
Are springin' o'er the gutters.
The lasses, skelpin' barefit, thrang,
In silks an' scarlets glitter;
Wi' sweet-milk cheese, in monie a whang,
An' farls baked wi' butter,
Fu' crump that day.

When by the plate we set our nose,
Weel heaped up wi' ha'pence,
A greedy glow'r black bonnet throws,
An' we maun draw our tippence.
Then in we go to see the show,
On ev'ry side they'r gath'rin',
Some carrying dails, some chairs an' stools,
An' some are busy blethrin'
Right loud that day.

Here stands a shed to fend the show'rs,
An' screen our countra gentry,
There, racer Jess, and twa-three wh-res,
Are blinkin' at the entry.
Here sits a raw of tittlin' jades,
Wi' heaving breast an' bare neck,
An' there a batch o' wabster lads,
Blackguarding frae Kilmarnock
For fun this day.

Here some are thinkin' on their sins,
An' some upo' their claes;
Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
Anither sighs an' prays:
On this hand sits a chosen swatch,
Wi' screw'd up grace-proud faces;
On that a set o' chaps at watch,
Thrang winkin' on the lasses
To chairs that day.

O happy is that man an' blest!
Nae wonder that it pride him!
Wha's ain dear lass that he likes best,
Comes clinkin down beside him!
Wi' arm repos'd on the chair back,
He sweetly does compose him;
Which, by degrees slips round her neck,
An' loof upon her bosom,
Unkenn'd that day.

Now a' the congregation o'er
Is silent expectation:
For Moodie speels the holy door,
Wi' tidings o' d-mn-tion.
Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's face,
To's ain het hame had sent him,
Wi' fright that day.

Hear how he clears the points o' faith
Wi' rattlin' an' wi' thumpin'!
Now meekly calm, now wild in wrath,
He's stampin' an' he's jumpin'!
His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd-up snout,
His eldritch squeel and gestures,
Oh, how they fire the heart devout,
Like cantharidian plasters,
On sic a day.

But, hark! the tent has chang'd its voice
There's peace an' rest nae langer:
For a' the real judges rise,
They canna sit for anger.
Smith opens out his cauld harangues,
On practice and on morals;
An' aff the godly pour in thrangs,
To gie the jars an' barrels
A lift that day.

What signifies his barren shine,
Of moral powr's and reason?
His English style, an' gestures fine,
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That's right that day.

In guid time comes an antidote
Against sic poison'd nostrum;
For Peebles, frae the water-fit,
Ascends the holy rostrum:
See, up he's got the word o' God,
An' meek an' mim has view'd it,
While Common-Sense has ta'en the road,
An' aff, an' up the Cowgate,*
Fast, fast, that day.

Wee Miller, neist the guard relieves,
An' orthodoxy raibles,
Tho' in his heart he weel believes,
An' thinks it auld wives' fables:
But, faith! the birkie wants a manse,
So, cannily he hums them;
Altho' his carnal wit an' sense
Like hafflins-ways o'ercomes him
At times that day.

Now but an' ben, the change-house fills,
Wi' yill-caup commentators:
Here's crying out for bakes and gills,
An' there the pint stowp clatters:
While thick an' thrang, an' loud an' lang,
Wi' logic, an' wi' Scripture,
They raise a din, that, in the end,
Is like to breed a rupture
O' wrath that day.

Leeze me on drink! it gies us mair
Than either school or college:
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us fou o' knowledge.
Be't whiskey gill, or penny wheep,
Or ony stronger potion,
It never fails, on drinkin' deep,
To kittle up our notion
By night or day.

* A street so called, which faces the tent in Mauchline.

The lads an' lasses, blythely bent
To mind baith saul an' body,
Sit round the table, weel content,
An' steer about the toddy.
On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,
They're making observations;
While some are cozie i' the neuk,
An' formin' assignations
To meet some day.

But now the L—d's ain trumpet touts
Till a' the hills are rairin',
An' echoes back return the shouts:
Black Russell is na spairin':
His piercing words, like Highlan' swords,
Divide the joints an' marrow:
His talk o' Hell, whare devils dwell,
Our vera sauls does harrow*
Wi' fright that day.

A vast, unbottom'd, boundless pit,
Fill'd fou o' lowin' brunstane,
Wha's ragin' flame, an' scorchin' heat,
Wad melt the hardest whun-stane!
The half asleep start up wi' fear,
An' think they hear it roarin',
When presently it does appear,
'Twas but some neebor snorin'
Asleep that day.

'Twad be owre lang a tale, to tell
How mony stories past,
An' how they crowded to the yill,
When they were a' dismist:
How drink gaed round, in cogs an' caups,
Amang the furms an' benches;
An' cheese an' bread, frae women's laps,
Was dealt about in lunches,
An' dawds that day.

* Shakspeare's Hamlet.

In comes a gaucie, gash guidwife,
An' sits down by the fire,
Syne draws her kebbuck an' her knife,
The lasses they are shyer.
The auld guidmen, about the grace,
Frae side to side they bother,
Till some ane by his bonnet lays,
An' gi'es them't like a tether,
Fu' lang that day.

Waesucks! for him that gets nae lass,
Or lasses that hae naething!
Sma' need has he to say a grace,
Or melvie his braw claithing!
O wives be mindfu', ance yoursel
How bonnie lads ye wanted,
An' dinna, for a kebbuck-heel,
Let lasses be affronted
On sic a day!

Now Clinkumbell, wi' rattlin tow,
Begins to jow an' croon;
Some swagger hame, the best they dow,
Some wait the afternoon.
At slaps the billies halt a blink,
Till lasses strip their shoon:
Wi' faith an' hope, an' love an' drink,
They're a' in famous tune
For crack that day.

How monie hearts this day converts
O' sinners and o' lasses!
Their hearts o' stane, gin night, are gane,
As saft as ony flesh is.
There's some are fou o' love divine;
There's some are fou o' brandy;
An' monie jobs that day begin,
May end in houghmagandie
Some ither day.

The names of persons in this satiric drama are given from the Poet's manuscripts; more about them will be found in the note to "The Ordination." The scene is laid in the church-yard of Mauchline: the clergyman of the parish, with his assistants, are exhibited on the stage, while the lay members of the congregation, swelled by auxiliary weavers from Kilmarnock, compose the numerous persons of the under-plot of the piece. The Poet seems at first to have contemplated the introduction of allegorical figurantes. The parts which Fun, Hypocrisy, and Superstition have allotted to them in conceiving the poem have not been indicated; and, perhaps, it was but the aim of the Poet to awaken the attention of the reader to the scenes of fun, superstition, and hypocrisy which he proposed to disclose on," the holy spot," where he desired to meet them.

In these personages he had his eye on Fergusson's poem of "Leith Races:"—

"In July month, ae bonny morn,
When Nature's robe lay green,
Was spread o'er ilka rig o' corn,
To charm our roving een;
Glowrin' about I saw a quean,
The fairest 'neath the lift;
Her een were o' the siller sheen,
Her skin like snawy drift,
Sae white that day."

This personage upbraids Fergusson for going idly musing along the streets of Edinburgh, when he should be at Leith races to observe and sing of the fun and folly of mankind; the poet naturally inquires the name of his fair counsellor; she answers, like Fun in the "Holy Fair,"

"I dwell among the cauler springs,
That weet the land o' cakes,
And often tune my canty strings
At bridals and late wakes;
They ca' me MIRTH:—I ne'er was ken'd,
To grumble or look sour;
But blithe wad be a lift to lend,
Gif ye wad sey my power,
And pith this day."

Mirth, in her allegorical quality, neglects to accompany the Poet to the races—though he meets "wi' muckle fun and daffin."—"There are traits of infinite merit," says Jeffrey, "in 'Scotch Drink,' 'The Holy Fair,' 'The Halloween,' and several of the songs; in all of which it is very remarkable that he rises occasionally into a strain of beautiful description or lofty sentiment, far above the pitch of his original conception."

THE ORDINATION.

"For sense they little owe to frugal heav'n—
To please the mob they hide the little giv'n."

KILMARNOCK wabsters fidge an' claw,
An' pour your creeshie nations;
An' ye wha leather rax an' draw,
Of a' denominations,
Swith to the Laigh Kirk, ane an' a',
An' there tak up your stations;
Then aff to Begbie's in a raw,
An' pour divine libations
For joy this day.

Curst Common-sense, that imp o' hell,
Cam in wi' Maggie Lauder;*
But Oliphant aft made her yell,
An' Russell sair misca'd her;
This day Mackinlay taks the flail,
And he's the boy will blaud her!
He'll clap a shangan on her tail,
An' set the bairns to daud her
Wi' dirt this day.

Mak haste an' turn king David owre,
An' lilt wi' holy clangor;
O' double verse come gie us four,
An' then skirl up the Bangor:
This day the Kirk kicks up a stoure,
Nae mair the knaves shall wrang her,
For Heresy is in her pow'r,
And gloriously she'll whang her
Wi' pith this day.

* Alluding to a scoffing ballad which was made on the admission of the late reverend and worthy Mr. Lindsay to the Laigh Kirk.

Come, let a proper text be read,
An' touch it aff wi' vigor,
How graceless Ham* leugh at his dad,
Which made Canaan a niger;
Or Phineas† drove the murdering blade,
Wi' wh-re-abhoring rigor;
Or Zipporah, ‡ the scauldin' jad,
Was like a bluidy tiger
I' th' inn that day.

There, try his mettle on the creed,
And bind him down wi' caution,
That stipend is a carnal weed
He taks but for the fashion;
And gie him o'er the flock, to feed,
And punish each transgression;
Especial, rams that cross the breed,
Gie them sufficient threshin,
Spare them nae day.

Now, auld Kilmarnock, cock thy tail,
And toss thy horns fu' canty;
Nae mair thou'lt rowte out-owre the dale,
Because thy pasture's scanty;
For lapfu's large o' gospel kail
Shall fill thy crib in plenty,
An' runts o' grace the pick and wale,
No gi'en by way o' dainty,
But ilka day.

Nae mair by Babel's streams we'll weep,
To think upon our Zion;
And hing our fiddles up to sleep,
Like baby-clouts a-dryin':
Come, screw the pegs, wi' tunefu' cheep,
And o'er the thairms be tryin';
Oh, rare! to see our elbucks wheep,
An', a' like lamb-tails flyin'
Fu' fast this day!

* Genesis, ix. 22. † Numbers, xxv. 8. ‡ Exodus, iv. 25.

Lang Patronage, wi' rod o' airn,
Has shor'd the Kirk's undoin',
As lately Fenwick, sair forfairn,
Has proven to its ruin:
Our patron, honest man! Glencairn,
He saw mischief was brewin';
And like a godly elect bairn
He's wal'd us out a true ane,
And sound this day.

Now, Robinson harangue nae mair,
But steek your gab for ever:
Or try the wicked town of Ayr,
For there they'll think you clever;
Or, nae reflection on your lear,
Ye may commence a shaver;
Or to the Netherton repair,
And turn a carpet-weaver
Aff-hand this day.

Mutrie and you were just a match,
We never had sic twa drones:
Auld Hornie did the Laigh Kirk watch,
Just like a winkin' baudrons;
An ay' he catch'd the tither wretch,
To fry them in his caudrons:
But now his honor maun detach,
Wi' a' his brimstone squadrons,
Fast, fast this day.

See, see auld Orthodoxy's faes
She's swingein through the city;
Hark, how the nine-tail'd cat she plays!
I vow its unco pretty:
There, Learning, with his Greekish face,
Grunts out some Latin ditty;
And Common Sense is gaun, she says,
To mak to Jamie Beattie
Her plaint this day.

But there's Morality himsel',
Embracing all opinions;
Here, how he gies the tither yell,
Between his twa companions;
See, how she peels the skin an' fell,
As ane were peelin' onions!
Now there—they're packed aff to hell,
And banish'd our dominions,
Henceforth this day.

O, happy day! rejoice, rejoice!
Come bouse about the porter!
Morality's demure decoys
Shall here nae mair find quarter:
Mackinlay, Russell, are the boys,
That Heresy can torture:
They'll gie her on a rape a hoyse,
And cowe her measure shorter
By th' head some day.

Come, bring the tither mutchkin in,
And here's, for a conclusion,
To every New-Light* mother's son,
From this time forth, Confusion:
If mair they deave us with their din,
Or Patronage intrusion,
We'll light a spunk, and, ev'ry skin,
We'll rin them aff in fusion
Like oil, some day.

John Russell, minister of Kilmarnock, against whom Burns bent the bitterest shafts of his satire, was a very remarkable man. For all that is graceful in expression, or vivid in delineation in the following sketch, I am indebted to Hugh Millar, mason in Cromarty.—"Russell came from Moray; he obtained the

* "New Light" is a cant phrase, in the West of Scotland, for those religious opinions which Dr. Taylor of Norwich has defended so strenuously.

school of Cromarty, was no favorite with the scholars, and was one of those who mistake severity for duty. He was a large, robust, dark-complexioned man, imperturbably grave, fierce of temper, and had a stern expression of countenance. It is said that a lady, who had been one of his pupils, actually fainted when she heard him, many years afterwards, speak of transgressions from the pulpit. One of his boys, who usually carried the key of the school in his pocket, happened to lose it one day, and got such a flogging that, when he grew to be a man, in all cases of mental perturbation and misery he groped in his pocket, as he did on that fatal morning for the key. He became popular as a preacher: his manner was strong and energetic: the severity of his temper was a sort of genius to him while he described, which he loved to do, the tortures of the wicked in a future state. He printed some of his sermons: they are of a controversial nature, and written in a bold, rough style, and fitter to be listened to than read. He sat himself against sabbath-breaking; and used to take his stand at one of the streets leading from the town, and turn transgressors back by the shoulders."

"It was not an unwelcome call to some of the citizens, which took Russell from Cromarty to a chapel of ease in Kilmarnock. A native of Cromarty, who happened to be at that time in the west of Scotland, walked to Mauchline to hear his old schoolmaster preach at the Sacrament;—this was about 1792. There was an excellent sermon to be heard from the tent, and excellent drink to be had in a neighbouring ale-house, and between the two the people seemed much divided. A young clergyman was preaching, and Russell was nigh him: at every fresh movement of the people, or ungodly burst of sound from the ale-house, the latter would raise himself on tiptoe—look sternly towards the change-house, and then at his younger brother in the pulpit: at last his own time to preach arrived—he sprang into the tent—closed the bible—and without psalm or prayer, or other preliminary matter, burst out at once in a passionate and eloquent address upon the folly and sin which a portion of the people were committing. The sound in the ale-house ceased—the inmates came out and listened to the denunciation, which some of them remembered with a shudder in after-life. He lived to a great age, and was always a dauntless and intrepid man: when seventy years old or so, he saw a Cromarty man beaten down in the streets of Stirling: Russell elbowed the crowd aside, plucked the sufferer, like a brand from the burning, saying—'Waes me, that your father's son should behave like a blackguard in the town where I am a minister.' He

grew temperate in his sermons as he grew old, and became a great favorite with the more grave and staid portion of his people." In look and manner, and fortitude of character, Russell seems to have resembled the Poet not a little. "The Ordination" is the only one of Burns' Old-Light satires which he admitted into the first edition: it was written when Mackinlay was called to Kilmarnock.

THE CALF.

TO THE REV. MR. JAMES STEVEN,

On his Text, MALACHI, iv. 2.—"And they shall go forth, and grow up, like CALVES of the stall."

RIGHT, Sir! your text I'll prove it true,
Though Heretics may laugh;
For instance; there's yoursel' just now,
God knows, an unco Calf!

And should some patron be so kind,
As bless you wi' a kirk,
I doubt na, Sir, but then we'll find,
Ye're still as great a Stirk.

But, if the lover's raptur'd hour
Shall ever be your lot,
Forbid it, ev'ry heavenly power,
You e'er should be a Stot!

Tho', when some kind, connubial dear,
Your but-and-ben adorns,
The like has been that you may wear
A noble head of horns.

And in your lug, most reverend James,
To hear you roar and rowte,
Few men o' sense will doubt your claims
To rank amang the nowte.

And when ye're number'd wi' the dead,
Below a grassy hillock,
Wi' justice they may mark your head—
"Here lies a famous Bullock!"

"The Calf" had a singular origin. One Sunday, Gavin Hamilton said to the Poet—"Come and dine with me after you return from the Kirk, and be sure and remember the text." The preacher was a young man of the name of James Steven, and it was his fate to preach from the text which introduces the poem. Burns, who seems to have been but little edified, remembering his promise to Hamilton, composed a rhyming satire on the minister from his own text, and repeated it when he sat down to dinner with his friend. The Poet had no personal dislike to his victim—and desired his lampoon to be looked upon merely as a poetic sally. The name, however, stuck to the preacher;—and I observe, in one of the letters to Burns from his younger brother, who died in London, the following passage, dated 21st March, 1790:—"We were at Covent Garden chapel this forenoon to hear the 'Calf' preach: he is grown very fat, and is as boisterous as ever."

TO JAMES SMITH.

"Friendship! mysterious cement of the soul!
Sweet'ner of life, and solder of society!
I owe thee much!——"

BLAIR.

DEAR SMITH, the sleest, paukie thief,
That e'er attempted stealth or rief,
Ye surely hae some warlock-breef
Owre human hearts;
For ne'er a bosom yet was prief
Against your arts.

For me, I swear by sun an' moon,
And ev'ry star that blinks aboon,
Ye've cost me twenty pair o' shoon
Just gaun to see you;
And ev'ry ither pair that's done,
Mair ta'en I'm wi' you.

That auld capricious carlin, Nature,
To mak amends for scrimpit stature,
She's turn'd you aff, a human creature
On her first plan;
And in her freaks, on every feature,
She's wrote, the Man.

Just now I've ta'en the fit o' rhyme,
My barmie noddle's working prime,
My fancy yerkit up sublime
Wi' hasty summon:
Hae ye a leisure-moment's time
To hear what's comin'?

Some rhyme a neighbour's name to lash;
Some rhyme (vain thought!) for needfu' cash;
Some rhyme to court the countra clash,
An' raise a din;
For me, an aim I never fash;
I rhyme for fun.

The star that rules my luckless lot,
Has fated me the russet coat,
An' damn'd my fortune to the groat;
But in requit,
Has blest me wi' a random shot
O' countra wit.

This while my notion's ta'en a sklent,
To try my fate in guid black prent;
But still the mair I'm that way bent,
Something cries "Hoolie!
I red you, honest man, tak tent!
Ye'll shaw your folly.

"There's ither poets much your betters,
Far seen in Greek, deep men o' letters,
Hae thought they had ensur'd their debtors,
A' future ages;
Now moths deform in shapeless tatters,
Their unknown pages."

Then farewell hopes o' laurel-boughs,
To garland my poetic brows!
Henceforth I'll rove where busy ploughs
Are whistling thrang,
An' teach the lanely heights an' howes
My rustic sang.

I'll wander on, with tentless heed
How never-halting moments speed,
Till fate shall snap the brittle thread;
Then, all unknown,
I'll lay me with th' inglorious dead,
Forgot and gone!

But why o' death begin a tale?
Just now we're living sound and hale,
Then top and maintop crowd the sail,
Heave care o'er side!
And large, before enjoyment's gale,
Let's tak the tide.

This life, sae far's I understand,
Is a' enchanted fairy land,
Where pleasure is the magic wand,
That, wielded right,
Maks hours like minutes, hand in hand,
Dance by fu' light.

The magic wand then let us wield;
For, ance that five-an'-forty's speel'd,
See crazy, weary, joyless eild,
Wi' wrinkl'd face,
Comes hostin', hirplin' owre the field,
Wi' creepin' pace.

"When ance life's day draws near the gloamin',
Then fareweel vacant, careless roamin';
An' fareweel cheerfu' tankards foamin',
An' social noise;
An' fareweel dear, deluding woman!
The joy of joys!

O Life! how pleasant in thy morning,
Young Fancy's rays the hills adorning!
Cold-pausing caution's lesson scorning,
We frisk away,
Like school-boys, at the expected warning,
To joy and play.

We wander there, we wander here,
We eye the rose upon the brier,
Unmindful that the thorn is near,
Among the leaves;
And tho' the puny wound appear,
Short while it grieves.

Some, lucky, find a flow'ry spot,
For which they never toil'd nor swat;
They drink the sweet and eat the fat,
But care or pain;
And, haply, eye the barren hut
With high disdain.

With steady aim, some fortune chase;
Keen hope does ev'ry sinew brace;
Thro' fair, thro' foul, they urge the race,
And seize the prey:
Then cannie, in some cozie place,
They close the day.

And others, like your humble servan'
Poor wights! nae rules nor roads observin';
To right, or left, eternal swervin',
They zig-zag on;
'Till curst with age, obscure an' starvin',
They aften groan.

Alas! what bitter toil an' straining—
But truce with peevish, poor complaining!
Is fortune's fickle Luna waning?
E'en let her gang!
Beneath what light she has remaining,
Let's sing our sang.

My pen I here fling to the door,
And kneel, "Ye Pow'rs," and warm implore,
"Tho' I should wander terra o'er,
In all her climes,
Grant me but this, I ask no more,
Ay rowth o' rhymes.

"Gie dreeping roasts to countra lairds,
Till icicles hing frae their beards;
Gie fine braw claes to fine life-guards,
And maids of honor!
And yill an' whisky gie to cairds,
Until they sconner.

"A title, Dempster merits it;
A garter gie to Willie Pitt;
Gie wealth to some be-ledger'd cit,
In cent. per cent.
But give me real, sterling wit,
And I'm content.

"While ye are pleas'd to keep me hale,
I'll sit down o'er my scanty meal,
Be't water-brose, or muslin-kail,
Wi' cheerfu' face,
As lang's the muses dinna fail
To say the grace."

An anxious e'e I never throws
Behint my lug, or by my nose;
I jouk beneath misfortune's blows
As weel's I may;
Sworn foe to sorrow, care, and prose,
I rhyme away.

O ye douce folk, that live by rule,
Grave, tideless-blooded, calm and cool,
Compar'd wi' you—O fool! fool! fool!
How much unlike!
Your hearts are just a standing pool,
Your lives, a dyke!

Nae hair-brain'd, sentimental traces,
In your unletter'd nameless faces!
In arioso trills and graces
Ye never stray,
But gravissimo, solemn basses
Ye hum away.

Ye are sae grave, nae doubt ye're wise;
Nae ferly tho' ye do despise
The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
The rattling squad:
I see you upward cast your eyes—
—Ye ken the road.—

Whilst I—but I shall haud me there—
Wi' you I'll scarce gang ony where—
Then, Jamie, I shall say nae mair,
But quat my sang,
Content wi' you to mak a pair,
Whare'er I gang.

The James Smith to whom this admirable epistle is addressed, was a shopkeeper in Mauchline during the Poet's sojourn in the west: not succeeding there, he established a calico printing manufactory at Avon, near Linlithgow; and while there we find Burns, in April, 1788, informing him of having married "a certain clean-limbed, handsome, bewitching young hussey" of his acquaintance, and desiring him to send one of his best printed shawls, as he had a wish that the first present he made her should be the work of one whose friendship he counted on as a life-rent lease. This friendship was not to last. Smith failed in his speculations, and sailed for the West Indies, where he did

not live long. He was a person of ready wit, lively manners, and much respected by the Poet: the compliments paid to him in this poem are worthy of having lived for.—"The poems," says Currie, "as well as the letters of Burns, may be considered as the effusions of his sensibility and the transcript of his own musings on the real incidents of his humble life." This is a just remark; and it may be added, that the Poet was fond of emptying his heart in rhyming epistles: he never appears more at his ease or happier in his handling.

"Where can we find," says Professor Walker, "a more exhilarating enumeration of the enjoyments of youth, contrasted with their successive extinction as age advances, than in the epistle to James Smith?" Yet, though the Poet includes himself in the number of

> "The hairum-scairum, ram-stam boys,
> The rattling squad."

we know that, when he penned these words, his expenses did not exceed seven pounds a-year; and that, as one of his fellow-peasants said, "he just drank a glass or sae like ony other body." Smith it will be remembered, accompanied Burns to Posie Nansie's, when "The Jolly Beggars" dawned on his fancy.

THE VISION.

DUAN FIRST.*

The sun had clos'd the winter day,
The curlers quat their roaring play,
An' hunger'd maukin ta'en her way
To kail-yards green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

The thresher's weary flingin'-tree
The lee-lang day had tired me;

* *Duan*, a term of Ossian's for the different divisions of a digressive poem. See his "Cath-Loda," vol. ii. of M'Pherson's translation

And when the day had clos'd his e'e,
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensivelie,
I gaed to rest.

There, lanely, by the ingle-cheek,
I sat and ey'd the spewing reek,
That fill'd, wi' hoast-provoking smeek,
The auld clay biggin';
An' heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin'.

All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mus'd on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthfu' prime,
An' done nae thing,
But stringin' blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

Had I to guid advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a market,
Or strutted in a bank an' clarkit
My cash-account:
While here, half-mad, half-fed, half-sarkit,
Is a' th' amount.

I started, mutt'ring, blockhead! coof!
And heav'd on high my waukit loof,
To swear by a' yon starry roof,
Or some rash aith,
That I, henceforth, would be rhyme-proof
Till my last breath—

When, click! the string the snick did draw:
And, jee! the door gaed to the wa';
An' by my ingle-lowe I saw,
Now bleezin' bright,
A tight, outlandish hizzie, braw,
Come full in sight.

Ye need na doubt, I held my whisht;
The infant aith, half-form'd, was crusht;
I glowr'd as eerie's I'd been dusht
In some wild glen;
When sweet, like modest worth, she blusht,
And stepped ben.

Green, slender, leaf-clad holly-boughs
Were twisted gracefu' round her brows;
I took her for some Scottish Muse,
By that same token,
An' come to stop those reckless vows
Wou'd soon been broken.

A "hair-brain'd, sentimental trace"
Was strongly marked in her face;
A wildly-witty, rustic grace
Shone full upon her;
Her eye, ev'n turn'd on empty space,
Beam'd keen with honor.

Down flow'd her robe, a tartan sheen,
'Till half a leg was scrimply seen;
And such a leg! my bonnie Jean
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight and clean,
Nane else came near it.

Her mantle large, of greenish hue,
My gazing wonder chiefly drew;
Deep lights and shades, bold-mingling, threw
A lustre grand;
And seem'd, to my astonish'd view,
A well known land.

Here, rivers in the sea were lost;
There, mountains to the skies were tost:
Here, tumbling billows mark'd the coast,
With surging foam;
There, distant shone Art's lofty boast,
The lordly dome.

Here, Doon pour'd down his far-fetch'd floods;
There, well-fed Irwine stately thuds:
Auld hermit Ayr staw thro' his woods,
On to the shore;
And many a lesser torrent scuds,
With seeming roar.

Low, in a sandy valley spread,
An ancient borough rear'd her head;
Still, as in Scottish story read,
She boasts a race,
To ev'ry nobler virtue bred,
And polish'd grace.

By stately tow'r or palace fair,
Or ruins pendent in the air,
Bold stems of heroes, here and there,
I could discern;
Some seem'd to muse, some seem'd to dare,
With feature stern.

My heart did glowing transport feel,
To see a race* heroic wheel,
And brandish round the deep-dy'd steel
In sturdy blows;
While back-recoiling seem'd to reel
Their southron foes.

His Country's Saviour,† mark him well!
Bold Richardton's‡ heroic swell;
The chief on Sark§ who glorious fell,
In high command;
And he whom ruthless fates expel
His native land.

* The Wallaces. † William Wallace.

‡ Adam Wallace, of Richardton, cousin to the immortal preserver of Scottish independence.

§ Wallace, Laird of Craigie, who was second in command, under Douglas, Earl of Ormond, at the famous battle on the banks of Sark, fought anno 1448. The glorious victory was principally owing to the judicious conduct and intrepid valor of the gallant Laird of Craigie, who died of his wounds after the action.

There, where a scepter'd Pictish shade *
Stalk'd round his ashes lowly laid,
I mark'd a martial race, portray'd
In colors strong;
Bold, soldier-featur'd, undismay'd
They strode along.

Thro' many a wild, romantic grove, †
Near many a hermit-fancy'd cove,
(Fit haunts for friendship or for love,)
In musing mood,
An aged judge, I saw him rove,
Dispensing good.

With deep-struck reverential awe ‡
The learned sire and son I saw,
To Nature's God and Nature's law
They gave their lore,
This, all its source and end to draw;
That, to adore.

Brydone's brave ward § I well could spy,
Beneath old Scotia's smiling eye;
Who call'd on Fame, low standing by,
To hand him on,
Where many a patriot-name on high
And hero shone.

DUAN SECOND.

With musing-deep, astonish'd stare,
I view'd the heav'nly-seeming fair;

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* Coilus, king of the Picts, from whom the district of Kyle is said to take its name, lies buried, as tradition says, near the family seat of the Montgomeries of Coils-field, where his burial-place is still shown.

† Barskimming, the seat of the late Lord Justice-Clerk, Sir Thomas Miller of Glenlee, afterwards President of the Court of Session.

‡ Catrine, the seat of Professor Dugald Stewart.

§ Colonel Fullarton.

A whisp'ring throb did witness bear
Of kindred sweet,
When with an elder sister's air
She did me greet.

"All hail! my own inspired bard!
In me thy native Muse regard!
Nor longer mourn thy fate is hard,
Thus poorly low!
I come to give thee such reward
As we bestow.

"Know, the great genius of this land
Has many a light, aerial band,
Who, all beneath his high command,
Harmoniously,
As arts or arms they understand,
Their labors ply.

"They Scotia's race among them share;
Some fire the soldier on to dare;
Some rouse the patriot up to bare
Corruption's heart:
Some teach the bard, a darling care,
The tuneful art.

"'Mong swelling floods of reeking gore,
They, ardent, kindling spirits, pour;
Or, 'mid the venal senate's roar,
They, sightless, stand,
To mend the honest patriot-lore,
And grace the hand.

"And when the bard, or hoary sage,
Charm or instruct the future age,
They bind the wild, poetic rage
In energy,
Or point the inconclusive page
Full on the eye.

"Hence Fullarton, the brave and young;
Hence Dempster's zeal-inspired tongue;
Hence sweet harmonious Beattie sung
His 'Minstrel lays;'
Or tore, with noble ardor stung,
The skeptic's bays.

"To lower orders are assign'd
The humbler ranks of human-kind,
The rustic bard, the lab'ring hind,
The artisan;
All choose, as various they're inclin'd
The various man.

"When yellow waves the heavy grain,
The threat'ning storm some, strongly, rein;
Some teach to meliorate the plain,
With tillage-skill;
And some instruct the shepherd-train,
Blythe o'er the hill,

"Some hint the lover's harmless wile;
Some grace the maiden's artless smile;
Some soothe the lab'rer's weary toil,
For humble gains,
And make his cottage-scenes beguile
His cares and pains.

"Some, bounded to a district-space,
Explore at large man's infant race,
To mark the embryotic trace
Of rustic bard;
And careful note each op'ning grace,
A guide and guard.

"Of these am I—Coila my name;
And this district as mine I claim,
Where once the Campbells, chiefs of fame,
Held ruling pow'r:
I mark'd thy embryo tuneful flame,
Thy natal hour.

"With future hope, I oft would gaze,
Fond, on thy little early ways,
Thy rudely carroll'd, chiming phrase,
In uncouth rhymes,
Fir'd at the simple, artless lays,
Of other times.

"I saw thee seek the sounding shore,
Delighted with the dashing roar;
Or when the North his fleecy store
Drove through the sky;
I saw grim nature's visage hoar
Struck thy young eye.

"Or when the deep green-mantled earth
Warm cherish'd ev'ry flow'rets birth,
And joy and music pouring forth
In ev'ry grove,
I saw thee eye the general mirth
With boundless love.

"When ripen'd fields, and azure skies,
Called forth the reaper's rustling noise,
I saw thee leave their evening joys,
And lonely stalk,
To vent thy bosom's swelling rise
In pensive walk.

"When youthful love, warm-blushing, strong,
Keen-shivering shot thy nerves along,
Those accents, grateful to thy tongue,
Th' adored Name,
I taught thee how to pour in song,
To soothe thy flame.

"I saw thy pulse's maddening play,
Wild send thee Pleasure's devious way,
Misled by Fancy's meteor ray,
By passion driven;
But yet the light that led astray
Was light from Heaven.

"I taught thy manners-painting strains,
The loves, the ways of simple swains,
Till now, o'er all my wide domains
Thy fame extends;
And some, the pride of Coila's plains,
Become thy friends.

"Thou canst not learn, nor can I show,
To paint with Thomson's landscape-glow;
Or wake the bosom-melting throe,
With Shenstone's art;
Or pour, with Gray, the moving flow
Warm on the heart.

"Yet, all beneath the unrivall'd rose,
The lowly daisy sweetly blows;
Tho' large the forest's monarch throws
His army shade,
Yet green the juicy hawthorn grows,
Adown the glade.

"Then never murmur nor repine;
Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
And, trust me, not Potosi's mine,
Nor king's regard,
Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
A rustic bard.

"To give my counsels all in one,
Thy tuneful flame still careful fan;
Preserve the dignity of man,
With soul erect;
And trust, the universal plan
Will all protect.

"And wear thou this"—she solemn said,
And bound the holly round my head:
The polish'd leaves and berries red,
Did rustling play;
And, like a passing thought, she fled
In light away.

Few have been so hardy as to find fault with this poem; even Jeffrey, in his depreciating estimate of the man and the poet, says,—"The only pieces that can be classed under the head of pure fiction, are the 'Brigs of Ayr,' and 'The Vision.' In the last there are some vigorous and striking lines." What is pure fiction? many of the poems of Burns have an equal right with "The Vision" to be classed with works of fiction.

Much of the man is in all Burns' productions; in the history of this poem we may read some of the vicissitudes of his love and friendship. In the original manuscript, the verse which descends into particulars about Coila, claimed for her a leg as straight, and tight, and tapering as that of Jean Armour; the destruction of the marriage lines brought a blight on his affection—he dethroned her in his Kilmarnock edition and raised up another in her stead:—

"Down flowed her robe, a tartan sheen,
Till half a leg was scrimply seen,
And such a leg! my Bess, I ween,
Could only peer it;
Sae straught, sae taper, tight and clean,
Nane else came near it."

Old affection triumphed by the time the Edinburgh edition was printed, and Jean was with pomp restored. Having extended his friendships after the first edition, he enlarged the robe of Coila, and emblazoned it with the history of the Wallaces who fought and were victorious at Stirling and Sark. This heroic race were not mentioned before. He also admitted others of a later day to the honors of the mantle; and gave Coila more than she could well bear.—"Burns," says Carlyle, "is not more distinguished by the clearness than by the impetuous force of his conceptions. Of his strength—the piercing emphasis with which he thought, may give an humble, but the readiest proof. Who ever uttered sharper sayings than his? words more memorable by their burning vehemence—by their cool vigor and their laconic pith?"

HALLOWEEN.*

[The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those who are unacquainted

* Is thought to be a night when witches, devils, and other mis-

with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added, to give some account of the principal charms and spells of that night, so big with prophecy to the peasantry in the west of Scotland. The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such should honor the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it among the more enenlightened in our own.]

"Yes! let the rich deride, the proud disdain,
The simple pleasures of the lowly train;
To me more dear, congenial to my heart,
One native charm, than all the gloss of art."

GOLDSMITH.

UPON that night, when fairies light,
On Cassilis Downans* dance,
Or owre the lays, in splendid blaze,
On sprightly coursers prance;
Or for Colean the rout is ta'en,
Beneath the moon's pale beams;
There, up the cove,† to stray an' rove
Among the rocks an' streams
To sport that night.

Amang the bonnie, winding banks
Where Doon rins, whimplin', clear,
Where Bruce‡ ance rul'd the martial ranks,
An' shook his Carrick spear,
Some merry, friendly, countra folks,
Together did convene,

---

chief-making beings are all abroad on their baneful, midnight errands; particularly those aerial people, the Fairies, are said on that night to hold a grand anniversary.

* Certain little, romantic, rocky, green hills, in the neighbourhood of the ancient seat of the Earls of Cassilis.

† A noted cavern near Colean-house, called the Cove of Colean; which, as well as Cassilis Downans, is famed in country story for being a favorite haunt of fairies.

‡ The famous family of that name, the ancestors of Robert, the great deliverer of his country, were Earls of Carrick.

To burn their nits, an' pou their stocks,
An' haud their Halloween
Fu' blythe that night.

The lasses feat, an' cleanly neat,
Mair braw than when they're fine;
Their faces blythe, fu' sweetly kythe,
Hearts leal, an' warm, an' kin':
The lads sae trig, wi' wooer-babs,
Weel knotted on their garten,
Some unco blate, an' some wi' gabs,
Gar lasses' hearts gang startin'
Whiles fast at night.

Then, first and foremost, thro' the kail,
Their stocks* maun a' be sought ance;
They steek their een, an' graip an' wale,
For muckle anes an' straught anes.
Poor hav'rel Will fell aff the drift,
An' wander'd through the bow-kail,
An' pou't, for want o' better shift,
A runt was like a sow-tail,
Sae bow't that night.

Then, straught or crooked, yird or nane,
They roar an' cry a' throu'ther;
The vera wee-things, todlin', rin
Wi' stocks out-owre their shouther;
An' gif the custoc's sweet or sour,
Wi' joctelegs they taste them;

* The first ceremony of Halloween is, pulling each a stock, or plant of kail. They must go out, hand in hand, with eyes shut, and pull the first they meet with: its being big or little, straight or crooked, is prophetic of the size and shape of the grand object of all their spells—the husband or wife. If any yird, or earth, stick to the root, that is toucher, or fortune; and the taste of the custoc, that is, the heart of the stem, is indicative of the natural temper and disposition. Lastly, the stems, or, to give them their ordinary appellation, the runts, are placed somewhere above the head of the door; and the Christian names of the people whom chance brings into the house, are, according to the priority of placing the runts, the names in question.

Syne coziely, aboon the door,
Wi' cannie care, they've placed them
To lie that night.

The lasses staw frae 'mang them a'
To pou their stalks o' corn ;*
But Rab slips out, an' jinks about,
Behint the muckle thorn:
He grippet Nelly hard an' fast;
Loud skirl'd a' the lasses;
But her tap-pickle maist was lost,
When kiuttlin' in the fause-house†
Wi' him that night.

The auld guidwife's weel hoordet nits‡
Are round an' round divided,
An' monie lads an' lasses fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle, couthie, side by side,
An' burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa wi' saucy pride,
And jump out-owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night.

Jean slips in twa wi' tentie e'e;
Wha 'twas, she wadna tell;
But this is Jock, an' this is me,
She says in to hersel:
He bleez'd owre her, an' she owre him,
As they wad never mair part;

---

* They go to the barn-yard and pull each, at three several times, a stalk of oats. If the third stalk wants the top-pickle, that is, the grain at the top of the stalk, the party in question will come to the marriage-bed any thing but a maid.

† When the corn is in a doubtful state, by being too green or wet, the stackbuilder, by means of old timber, &c., makes a large apartment in his stack, with an opening in the side which is fairest exposed to the wind: this he calls a fause-house.

‡ Burning the nuts is a famous charm. They name the lad and lass to each particular nut, as they lay them in the fire, and accordingly as they burn quietly together, or start from beside one another, the course and issue of the courtship will be.

'Till, fuff! he started up the lum,
An' Jean had e'en a sair heart
To see't that night.

Poor Willie, wi' his bow-kail runt,
Was brunt wi' primsie Mallie;
An' Mary, nae doubt, took the drunt,
To be compar'd to Willie;
Mall's nit lap out wi' pridefu' fling,
An' her ain fit it brunt it;
While Willie lap, and swoor, by jing,
'Twas just the way he wanted
To be that night.

Nell had the fause-house in her min',
She pits hersel an' Rob in;
In loving bleeze they sweetly join,
'Till white in ase they're sobbin';
Nell's heart was dancin' at the view,
She whisper'd Rob to leuk for't;
Rob, stowlins, prie'd her bonnie mou',
Fu' cozie in the neuk for't
Unseen that night.

But Merran sat behint their backs,
Her thoughts on Andrew Bell;
She lea'es them gashin' at their cracks,
And slips out by hersel:
She through the yard the nearest taks,
An' to the kiln she goes then,
An' darklings graipit for the bauks,
And in the blue-clue* throws then,
Right fear't that night.

* Whoever would, with success, try this spell, must strictly observe these directions:—Steal out, all alone, to the kiln, and, darkling, throw into the pot a clue of blue yarn; wind it in a clue off the old one; and, towards the latter end, something will hold the thread; demand "wha hauds?" i. e. who holds? An answer will be returned from the kiln-pot, by naming the Christian and surname of your future spouse.

An' ay she win't, an' ay she swat,
I wat she made nae jaukin';
'Till something held within the pat,
Guid L—d! but she was quaukin'!
But whether 'twas the Deil himsel,
Or whether 'twas a bauk-en',
Or whether it was Andrew Bell,
She did na wait on talkin'
To spier that night.

Wee Jenny to her graunie says,
"Will ye go wi' me, graunie?
I'll eat the apple* at the glass,
I gat frae uncle Johnie:"
She fuff't her pipe wi' sic a lunt,
In wrath she was sae vap'rin',
She notic't na, an azle brunt
Her braw new worset apron
Out thro' that night.

"Ye little skelpie-limmer's face!
I daur you try sic sportin',
As seek the foul Thief onie place,
For him to spae your fortune:
Nae doubt but ye may get a sight!
Great cause ye hae to fear it;
For monie a ane has gotten a fright,
An' liv'd an' died deleeret
On sic a night.

"Ae hairst afore the Sherra-moor,—
I mind't as weel's yestreen,
I was a gilpey then, I'm sure
I was na past fyfteen:

---

* Take a candle, and go alone to a looking-glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, to be, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.

The simmer had been cauld an' wat,
An' stuff was unco green;
An' ay a rantin' kirn we gat,
An' just on Halloween
It fell that night.

"Our stibble-rig was Rab M'Graen,
A clever, sturdy fallow:
He's sin' gat Eppie Sim wi' wean,
That liv'd in Achmacalla:
He gat hemp-seed,* I mind it weel,
And he made unco light o't;
But monie a day was by himsel,
He was sae sairly frighted
That very night."

Then up gat fechtin' Jamie Fleck,
An' he swoor by his conscience,
That he could saw hemp-seed a peck;
For it was a' but nonsense;
The auld guidman raught down the pock,
An' out a handfu' gied him;
Syne bad him slip frae 'mang the folk,
Sometime when nae ane see'd him,
An' try't that night.

He marches thro' amang the stacks,
Tho' he was something sturtin;
The graip he for a harrow taks,
An' haurls at his curpin;
An' ev'ry now an' then he says,
"Hemp-seed I saw thee,
An' her that is to be my lass,
Come after me, an' draw thee
As fast this night."

* Steal out, unperceived, and sow a handful of hemp-seed, harrowing it with any thing you can conveniently draw after you. Repeat, now and then, "Hemp seed I saw thee, hemp-seed I saw thee; and him (or her) that is to be my true love, come after me and pou

He whistl'd up Lord Lennox' march,
To keep his courage cheery;
Altho' his hair began to arch,
He was sae fley'd an' eerie:
'Till presently he hears a squeak,
An' then a grane an' gruntle;
He by his shouther gae a keek,
An' tumbl'd wi' a wintle
Out-owre that night.

He roar'd a horrid murder-shout,
In dreadfu' desperation!
An' young an' auld cam rinnin' out,
An' hear the sad narration:
He swoor 'twas hilchin Jean M'Craw,
Or crouchie Merran Humphie,
'Till, stop; she trotted thro' them a';
An' wha was it but Grumphie
Asteer that night!

Meg fain wad to the barn hae gaen,
To win three wechts o' naething;*
But for to meet the deil her lane,
She pat but little faith in:
She gies the herd a pickle nits,
An' twa red cheekit apples,
To watch, while for the barn she sets,
In hopes to see Tam Kipples
That vera night.

---

thee." Look over your left shoulder, and you will see the appearance of the person invoked, in the attitude of pulling hemp. Some traditions say, "Come after me, and shaw thee," that is, show thyself; in which case it simply appears. Others omit the harrowing, and say, "Come after me, and harrow thee."

* This charm must likewise be performed, unperceived, and alone. You go to the barn, and open both doors, taking them off the hinges, if possible; for there is danger that the being about to appear may shut the doors, and do you some mischief. Then take that instrument used in winnowing the corn, which, in our country dialect, we call a wecht; and go through all the attitudes of letting down corn against the wind. Repeat it three times; and the third

She turns the key wi' cannie thraw,
An' owre the threshold ventures;
But first on Sawnie gies a ca'
Syne bauldly in she enters:
A ratton rattled up the wa',
An' she cried, L—d, preserve her!
An' ran thro' midden-hole an' a',
An' pray'd wi' zeal and fervor,
Fu' fast that night.

They hoy't out Will, wi' sair advice;
They hecht him some fine braw ane;
It chanc'd the stack he faddom't thrice,*
Was timmer-propt for thrawin';
He taks a swirlie auld moss oak,
For some black, grousome carlin;
An' loot a winze, an' drew a stroke,
'Till skin in blypes cam haurlin'
Aff's nieves that night.

A wanton widow Leezie was,
As canty as a kittlen;
But, Och! that night, amang the shaws,
She got a fearfu' settlin'!
She thro' the whins, an' by the cairn,
An' owre the hill gaed scrievin,
Where three lairds' lands met at a burn,†
To dip her left sark-sleeve in,
Was bent that night.

---

time, an apparition will pass through the barn, in at the windy door, and out at the other, having both the figure in question, and the appearance or retinue, marking the employment or station in life.

* Take an opportunity of going, unnoticed, to a bean-stack, and fathom it three times round. The last fathom of the last time, you will catch in your arms the appearance of your future conjugal yoke-fellow.

† You go out, one or more, for this is a social spell, to a south running spring or rivulet, where "three lairds' lands meet," and dip your left shirt-sleeve. Go to bed in sight of a fire, and hang your wet sleeve before it to dry. Lie awake: and, some time near midnight, an apparition, having the exact figure of the grand ob

Whyles owre a linn the burnie plays,
As through the glen it wimpl't;
Whyles round a rocky scaur it strays;
Whyles in a wiel it dimpl't;
Whyles glitter'd to the nightly rays,
Wi' bickering, dancing dazzle;
Whyles cookit underneath the braes,
Below the spreading hazel
Unseen that night.

Amang the brackens, on the brae,
Between her an' the moon,
The deil, or else an outler quey,
Gat up an' gae a croon:
Poor Leezie's heart maist lap the hool;
Near lav'rock-height she jumpit,
But mist a fit, an' in the pool
Out-owre the lugs she plumpit,
Wi' a plunge that night.

In order, on the clean hearth-stane,
The luggies three* are ranged,
And ev'ry time great care is ta'en,
To see them duly changed:
Auld uncle John, wha wedlock's joys
Sin' Mar's year did desire,
Because he gat the toom-dish thrice,
He heav'd them on the fire
In wrath that night.

---

ject in question, will come and turn the sleeve, as if to dry the other side of it.

* Take three dishes; put clean water in one, foul water in another, leave the third empty: blindfold a person and lead him to the hearth where the dishes are ranged; he (or she) dips the left hand: if by chance in the clean water, the future husband or wife will come to the bar of matrimony a maid; if in the foul, a widow; if in the empty dish, it foretels, with equal certainty, no marriage at all. It is repeated three times, and every time the arrangement of the dishes is altered.

Wi' merry sangs, an' friendly cracks,
I wat they did na weary;
An' unco tales, an' funnie jokes,
Their sports were cheap an' cheery;
Till butter'd sow'ns,* wi' fragrant lunt,
Set a' their gabs a-streerin';
Syne, wi' a social glass o' strunt,
They parted aff careerin'
Fu' blythe that night.

The ancient festival of Halloween is now sinking into disuse: in my early days it was generally observed by the bulk of the Scottish population. Nor did it remain unsung till the days of Burns. A poem called Halloween, from the muse of my friend John Mayne, appeared in Ruddiman's Magazine for November, 1780;—some of the verses are striking and curious, and seem to have been known to the Poet of Ayrshire:—

"Of a' the festivals we hear
Frae Handsel-Munday till new-year,
There's few in Scotland held mair dear
For mirth, I ween,
Or yet can boast o' better cheer,
Than Halloween.

"Placed at their head the gudewife sits,
And deals round apples, pears, and nits,
Syne tells her guests how at sic bits
Where she has been,
Bogles hae gart fowk tyne their wits
On Halloween.

"Grieved she recounts how wi' mischance
Puir poossie's forced a' night to prance
Wi' fairies, wha in thousands dance
Upon the green,
Or sail wi' witches owre to France
On Halloween.

"And when they've trimm'd ilk heaped plate,
And a' things are laid out o' gate,
To ken their matrimonial mate
The youngsters keen
Search a' the dark decrees o' fate
On Halloween.

---

* Sowens, with butter instead of milk to them, is always the Halloween supper.

"A' things prepared in order due,
Gosh guides! what fearfu' pranks ensue!
Some i' the kiln-pat thraw a clew,
At whilk bedeen
Their sweethearts by the far end pu,
At Halloween.

"Ithers, wi' some uncanny gift,
In ane auld barn a riddle lift,
Where thrice, pretending corn to sift,
Wi' charms between,
Their jo appears, as white as drift,
At Halloween."

The scene where the Halloween of Burns is laid is on the romantic coast of Ayrshire: the cove of Colean, haunted in the days of the Bard by the fairies, gave shelter to Bruce and his intrepid followers when he planned the storming of Turnberry castle.

Of the fairies who, on sprightly coursers, rode on Cassillis-Downans, we have from Burns but a brief account;—the tale of Tamlane let us more into the secret of their midnight doings;—tradition adds a few particulars. They were not a mischievous race: they loved romantic hills and lonely valleys—they were fond of music and of children—their dress is invariably described as green—their heads bare, and their hair long and of a golden hue. The horses on which they rode were from fairy land, had small bells at their manes, long tails, and were of a cream color. The musical instruments of these spiritual people were corn-pipes and bog-reeds—but they could extract divine harmony out of an ordinary whistle. They loved bread baked of new meal: milk, warm from the cow, and honey dropt from the comb. They had the power of blessing or of cursing families and flocks, and never overlooked an ill deed nor forgot a favor. It is generally admitted that they left our land about seventy years ago: their mournings and moanings among the hills on the Hallowmass night of their departure—according to the assertion of an old shepherd—were melancholy to hear.

MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

A DIRGE.

When chill November's surly blast
Made fields and forests bare,

One ev'ning, as I wandered forth
Along the banks of Ayr,
I spy'd a man whose aged step
Seem'd weary, worn with care;
His face was furrow'd o'er with years,
And hoary was his hair.

"Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?"
Began the rev'rend sage;
"Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,
Or youthful pleasure's rage?
Or haply, prest with cares and woes,
Too soon thou hast began
To wander forth, with me, to mourn
The miseries of man.

"The sun that overhangs yon moors,
Out-spreading far and wide,
Where hundreds labor to support
A haughty lordling's pride:
I've seen yon weary winter-sun
Twice forty times return,
And ev'ry time has added proofs
That man was made to mourn.

O man! while in thy early years,
How prodigal of time!
Mispending all thy precious hours,
Thy glorious youthful prime!
Alternate follies take the sway;
Licentious passions burn;
Which tenfold force gives nature's law,
That man was made to mourn.

Look not alone on youthful prime,
Or manhood's active might;
Man then is useful to his kind,
Supported is his right:
But see him on the edge of life,
With cares and sorrows worn;

Then age and want—oh! ill-match'd pair!—
Show man was made to mourn.

A few seem favorites of fate,
In pleasure's lap carest;
Yet, think not all the rich and great
Are likewise truly blest.
But, oh! what crowds in every land,
All wretched and forlorn!
Thro' weary life this lesson learn—
That man was made to mourn.

Many and sharp the num'rous ills
Inwoven with our frame!
More pointed still we make ourselves,
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn!

See yonder poor, o'er-labor'd wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow-worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn.

If I'm design'd yon lordling's slave—
By Nature's law design'd—
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty or scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?

Yet, let not this too much, my son,
Disturb thy youthful breast;

This partial view of human-kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressed, honest man
Had never, sure, been born,
Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!

O Death! the poor man's dearest friend—
The kindest and the best!
Welcome the hour, my aged limbs
Are laid with thee at rest!
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,
From pomp and pleasure torn!
But, oh! a blest relief to those
That weary-laden mourn.

"Several of the poems," Gilbert Burns observes, "were produced for the purpose of bringing forward some favorite sentiment of the author. He used to remark to me, that he could not well conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man seeking work. In casting about in his mind how this sentiment might be brought forward, the elegy 'Man was made to Mourn,' was composed." An old Scottish ballad had some share in giving life and language to these emotions.—"I had an old granduncle," thus the Poet writes to Mrs. Dunlop, "with whom my mother lived a while in her girlish years. The good old man was long blind ere he died, during which time his highest enjoyment was to sit down and cry while my mother would sing the simple old song of 'The Life and Age of Man.'" From the Poet's venerable mother, Mr. Cromek procured a copy of this composition; it commences thus:—

"Upon the sixteen hunder year
Of God, and fifty-three,
Frae Christ was born, who bought us dear,
As writings testify;
On January the sixteenth day,
As I did lie alone,
With many a sigh and sob did say,
Ah, man was made to moan!"

The pious minstrel proceeds to compare the life of man to the seasons—five years of his "course" are considered equivalent to one of the months:—

"Then in comes March that noble arch,
With wholesome spring and air;
The child doth spring to years fifteen,
With visage fine and fair.
So do the flowers, with softening showers,
Ay spring up as we see;
Yet ne'ertheless, remember this—
That one day we must die."

April and May are prettily described: the succeeding month still better:—

"Then brave April doth sweetly smile,
The flow'rs do fair appear,
The child is then become a man
To the age of twenty year.
If he be kind and well inclin'd
And brought up at the school,
Then men may know if he foreshow
A wise man or a fool.

"Then cometh May, gallant and gay
When fragrant flow'rs do thrive,
The child is then become a man
Of age twentie-and-five:
And for his life doth seek a wife
His life and years to spend,
Christ from above sent Peace and love
And grace unto the end.

"Then cometh June with pleasant tune,
When fields with flowers are clad,
And Phœbus bright is at his height—
All creatures then are glad;
Then he appears of thretty years,
With courage bold and stout;
His nature so makes him to go,
Of death he hath no doubt."

There are other and even closer resemblances between this antique strain and the "Man was made to Mourn;" but all must concur in the opinion of Lockhart, that "whatever might be the casual idea that set the Poet to work, it is evident that he wrote from the habitual feelings of his own bosom."

TO RUIN.

I.

All hail! inexorable lord!
At whose destruction-breathing word,
The mightiest empires fall!
Thy cruel, woe-delighted train,
The ministers of grief and pain,
A sullen welcome, all!
With stern-resolv'd, despairing eye,
I see each aimed dart;
For one has cut my dearest tie,
And quivers in my heart.
Then low'ring and pouring,
The storm no more I dread;
Though thick'ning and black'ning,
Round my devoted head.

II.

And thou grim pow'r, by life abhorr'd,
While life a pleasure can afford,
Oh! hear a wretch's prayer!
No more I shrink appall'd, afraid;
I court, I beg thy friendly aid,
To close this scene of care!
When shall my soul, in silent peace,
Resign life's joyless day;
My weary heart its throbbings cease,
Cold mould'ring in the clay?
No fear more, no tear more,
To stain my lifeless face;
Enclasped and grasped
Within thy cold embrace!

Burns seems to have glanced into futurity with a prophetic eye: images of misery and woe darkened the distant vista: and

when he looked back on his career he saw little to console him. —"I have been, this morning," he observes, "taking a peep through, as Young finely says, 'The dark postern of time long elapsed.' 'Twas a rueful prospect! What a tissue of thoughtlessness, weakness, and folly! My life reminded me of a ruined temple. What strength, what proportion, in some parts! What unsightly gaps, what prostrate ruins in others! I kneeled down before the Father of Mercies and said :—'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.' I rose, eased and strengthened." The present fragment seems to have been composed when his farming speculations failed—one on whom he had set his heart had deserted him—and "Hungry Ruin had him in the wind."

TO

JOHN GOUDIE OF KILMARNOCK,

ON THE PUBLICATION OF HIS ESSAYS.

O Goudie! terror of the Whigs,
Dread of black coats and rev'rend wigs,
Sour Bigotry, on her last legs,
Girnin', looks back,
Wishin' the ten Egyptian plagues
Wad seize you quick.

Poor gapin', glowrin' Superstition,
Waes me! she's in a sad condition;
Fie! bring Black Jock, her state physician,
To see her w-t-r.
Alas! there's ground o' great suspicion
She'll ne'er get better.

Auld Orthodoxy lang did grapple,
But now she's got an unco ripple;
Haste, gie her name up i' the chapel,
Nigh unto death;
See, how she fetches at the thrapple,
An' gasps for breath.

Enthusiasm's past redemption,
Gaen in a galloping consumption,
Not a' the quacks, wi' a' their gumption,
Will ever mend her.
Her feeble pulse gies strong presumption
Death soon will end her.

"'Tis you and Taylor* are the chief,
Wha are to blame for this mischief,
But gin the Lord's ain focks gat leave,
A toom tar-barrel,
An' twa red peats wad send relief,
An' end the quarrel.

The Essays of John Goudie are all but forgotten; not so the burning commentary of the Bard. To the English admirers of Burns it is perhaps necessary to say that the "Whigs," of whom the Essayist was the terror, were the Old-Light portion of the Presbyterian kirk; men, ceremonious in their observances, austere in their conversation, and who accounted themselves Calvinists to the letter.—"These people inculcate," says a reverend biographer," that the greatest sinner is the greatest favorite of heaven—that a reformed bawd is more acceptable to the Almighty than a pure virgin who has hardly ever transgressed, even in thought—that the lost sheep alone will be saved, and that the ninety-and-nine out of the hundred will be left in the wilderness to perish without mercy—that the Saviour of the world loves the elect, not from any lovely qualities which they possess, for they are hateful in his sight—but 'he loves them, because he loves them.' Such are the sentiments which are breathed by those who are denominated high Calvinists, and from which the soul of a poet who loves mankind, and who has not studied the system in all its bearings, recoils with horror." Burns—against whom a hue and cry of heresy was raised—has said nothing so ferocious as this "bold commentator." The picture which he has painted is as unjust as it is indecorous.

Death has been dealing—to use the language of the old bard—with all the clergymen of the west whom the poet lampooned or praised, save one, and that one is MacKinlay, one of the char-

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* Dr. Taylor, of Norwich.

acters in the "Ordination." He is a good and venerable man: was the friend of Auld, minister of Mauchline, and it was his practice, when he called at his reverend brother's house to shake hands, kneel down and unite in asking a blessing from above on their ministry, and on the flocks committed to their charge. There is something apostolical or primitive in this.

EPISTLE TO J. LAPRAIK,

AN OLD SCOTTISH BARD.

April 1*st*, 1785.

While briers an' woodbines budding green,
An' paitricks scraichin' loud at e'en,
An' morning poussie whiddin seen,
Inspire my muse,
This freedom in an unknown frien'
I pray excuse.

On fasten-een we had a rockin',
To ca' the crack and weave our stockin';
And there was muckle fun an' jokin',
Ye need na doubt;
At length we had a hearty yokin'
At sang about.

There was ae sang, amang the rest,
Aboon them a' it pleas'd me best,
That some kind husband had addrest
To some sweet wife:
It thrill'd the heart-strings thro' the breast,
A' to the life.

I've scarce heard aught describ'd sae weel,
What gen'rous, manly bosoms feel;
Thought I, "Can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?"
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk.

It pat me fidgin-fain to hear't,
And sae about him there I spier't,
Then a' that ken't him round declared
He had ingine,
That nane excell'd it, few cam near't,
It was sae fine.

That, set him to a pint of ale,
An' either douce or merry tale,
Or rhymes an' sangs he'd made himsel,
Or witty catches,
'Tween Inverness and Tiviotdale,
He had few matches.

Then up I gat, an' swoor an aith,
Tho' I should pawn my pleugh and graith,
Or die a cadger pownie's death,
At some dyke-back,
A pint an' gill I'd gie them baith
To hear your crack.

But, first an' foremost, I should tell,
Amaist as soon as I could spell,
I to the crambo-jingle fell,
Tho' rude an' rough,
Yet crooning to a body's sel',
Does weel enough.

I am nae poet, in a sense,
But just a rhymer, like, by chance,
An' hae to learning nae pretence,
Yet, what the matter!
Whene'er my Muse does on me glance,
I jingle at her.

Your critic-folk may cock their nose,
And say, "How can you e'er propose,
You, wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?"
But, by your leaves, my learned foes,
Ye're may be wrang.

What's a' your jargon o' your schools,
Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
If honest Nature made you fools,
What sairs your grammars?
Ye'd better ta'en up spades and shools,
Or knappin-hammers.

A set o' dull, conceited hashes,
Confuse their brains in college classes!
They gang in stirks, and come out asses,
Plain truth to speak;
An' syne they think to climb Parnassus
By dint o' Greek!

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire!
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then though I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

O for a spunk o' Allan's glee,
Or Fergusson's the bauld and slee,
Or bright Lapraik's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be lear eneugh for me,
If I could get it!

Now, sir, if ye hae friends enow,
Tho' real friends, I b'lieve, are few,
Yet, if your catalogue be fou,
I'se no insist,
But gif ye want ae friend that's true—
I'm on your list.

I winna blaw about mysel;
As ill I like my fauts to tell;
But friends an' folk that wish me well,
They sometimes roose me;
Tho' I maun own, as monie still
As far abuse me.

There's ae wee faut they whiles lay to me,
I like the lasses—Gude forgie me!
For monie a plack they wheedle frae me,
At dance or fair;
May be some ither thing they gie me
They weel can spare.

But Mauchline race, or Mauchline fair,
I should be proud to meet you there;
We'se gie ae night's discharge to care,
If we forgather,
An' hae a swap o' rhymin'-ware
Wi' ane anither.

The four-gill chap, we'se gar him clatter,
An' kirsen him wi' reekin' water;
Syne we'll sit down an' tak our whitter,
To cheer our heart;
An' faith, we'se be acquainted better
Before we part.

Awa, ye selfish warly race,
Wha think that havins, sense, an' grace,
Ev'n love an' friendship should give place
To catch-the-plack!
I dinna like to see your face,
Nor hear your crack.

But ye whom social pleasure charms,
Whose hearts the tide of kindness warms,
Who hold your being on the terms,
"Each aid the others,"
Come to my bowl, come to my arms,
My friends, my brothers!

But to conclude my lang epistle,
As my auld pen's worn to the grissle;
Twa lines frae you wad gar me fissle,
Who am, most fervent,
While I can either sing, or whissle,
Your friend and servant.

John Lapraik, to whom this and two other epistles are addressed, lived on his own ground at Dalfram, near Muirkirk, and was a rustic follower of the muses. In an evil hour, when the love of making "meikle mair" came upon him, he purchased shares in what Burns called "that villanous bubble, the Ayr bank," and was involved in its ruin. The song which moved the Poet to write to him was composed, he said, in one of his days of despondency, when his wife refused to be comforted. Misfortune became his muse and inspired him:—the first verse is very beautiful,

"When I upon thy bosom lean,
And fondly clasp thee a' my ain,
I glory in the sacred ties
That made us ane wha ance were twain;
A mutual flame inspires us baith,
The tender look, the melting kiss,
Even years shall ne'er destroy our love,
But only gie us change of bliss."

"The Epistle to J. Lapraik," says Gilbert Burns, "was produced exactly on the occasion described by the author. Rocking is a term derived from primitive times, when our country-women employed their spare hours in spinning on the rock or distaff. This simple instrument is a very portable one, and well fitted to the social inclination of meeting in a neighbour's house—hence the phrase of going a rocking, or with the rock As the connexion the phrase had with the implement was forgotten when the rock gave place to the spinning-wheel the phrase came to be used by both sexes on social occasions, and men talk of going with their rocks as well as women." Formerly, in the Lowlands of Scotland, wool was carded and spun for the benefit of the family to whom these friendly visitations were made. In some inland villages the social custom still prevails.

TO THE SAME.

April 21*st*, 1785.

While new-ca'd kye rowte at the stake,
An' pownies reek in pleugh or braik,
This hour on e'enin's edge I take,
To own I'm debtor,
To honest-hearted, auld Lapraik,
For his kind letter.

Forjesket sair, wi' weary legs,
Rattlin' the corn out-owre the rigs,
Or dealing thro' amang the naigs
Their ten hours' bite,
My awkart muse sair pleads and begs,
I would na write.

The tapetless ramfeezl'd hizzie,
She's saft at best, and something lazy,
Quo' she, "Ye ken, we've been sae busy,
This month an' mair,
That trouth, my head is grown right dizzie,
An' something sair."

Her dowff excuses pat me mad:
"Conscience," says I, "ye thowless jad!
I'll write, an' that a hearty blaud,
This vera night;
So dinna ye affront your trade,
But rhyme it right.

"Shall bauld Lapraik, the king o' hearts,
Tho' mankind were a pack o' cartes,
Roose you sae weel for your deserts,
In terms sae friendly,
Yet ye'll neglect to shaw your parts,
An' thank him kindly?"

Sae I gat paper in a blink,
An' down gaed stumpie in the ink:
Quoth I, "before I sleep a wink,
I vow I'll close it;
An' if ye winna mak it clink,
By Jove I'll prose it!"

Sae I've begun to scrawl, but whether
In rhyme, or prose, or baith thegither,
Or some hotch-potch that's rightly neither,
Let time mak proof;
But I shall scribble down some blether
Just clean aff-loof.

My worthy friend, ne'er grudge an' carp,
Tho' fortune use you hard an' sharp;
Come, kittle up your moorland-harp
Wi' gleesome touch!
Ne'er mind how fortune waft an' warp;
She's but a b-tch.

She's gien me monie a jirt an' fleg,
Sin' I could straddle owre a rig;
But, by the L—d, tho' I should beg
Wi' lyart pow,
I'll laugh, an' sing, an' shake my leg,
As lang's I dow!

Now comes the sax an' twentieth simmer,
I've seen the bud upo' the timmer,
Still persecuted by the limmer
Frae year to year;
But yet, despite the kittle kimmer,
I, Rob, am here.

Do ye envy the city gent,
Behint a kist to lie and sklent,
Or purse-proud, big wi' cent. per cent.
And muckle wame,
In some bit brugh to represent
A bailie's name?

Or is't the paughty, feudal Thane,
Wi' ruffl'd sark an' glancing cane,
Wha thinks himsel nae sheep-shank bane,
But lordly stalks,
While caps and bonnets aff are taen,
As by he walks?

"O Thou wha gies us each guid gift!
Gie me o' wit an sense a lift,
Then turn me, if Thou please, adrift,
Thro' Scotland wide;
Wi' cits nor lairds I wadna shift,
In a' their pride!"

Were this the charter of our state,
"On pain' o' hell be rich an' great,"
Damnation then would be our fate,
Beyond remead ;
But, thanks to Heav'n, that 's no the gate
We learn our creed.

For thus the royal mandate ran,
When first the human race began,
"The social, friendly, honest man,
Whate'er he be,
'Tis he fulfils great Nature's plan,
An' none but he!"

O mandate, glorious and divine!
The followers o' the ragged Nine,
Poor, thoughtless devils! yet may shine
In glorious light,
While sordid sons o' Mammon's line
Are dark as night.

Tho' here they scrape, an' squeeze, an' growl,
Their worthless nievfu' of a soul
May in some future carcase howl
The forest's fright ;
Or in some day-detesting owl
May shun the light.

Then may Lapraik and Burns arise,
To reach their native kindred skies,
And sing their pleasures, hopes, an' joys,
In some mild sphere,
Still closer knit in friendship's ties
Each passing year!

The reply of Lapraik has been recorded; it was in its nature pleasing, and drew from the Bard of Mossgiel this second epistle, in which he says much of his toils and his musings. I have heard one of our greatest English poets recite, with com-

mendations, most of the stanzas, pointing out as he went the all but imitable ease and happiness of thought and language. He remarked, however, that Burns was either fond of out-of-the-way sort of words, or that he made them occasionally in his fits of feeling and fancy.—" For instance, he calls his muse

'The tapetless ramfeezled hizzie,'

and complains of being himself—

'Forjesket sair, wi' weary legs.'

Now, I sorely suspect, that though 'forjesket' may pass, both 'tapetless' and 'ramfeezled' are new comers into your dialect." To my friend I replied, that tapetless indicated want of strength; that forjesket was a word in common use, and meant worn-out with labor; and, with respect to ramfeezled, I could only quote the words of Cowper.—" Poor Burns loses much of his deserved praise in this country through our ignorance of his language. I despair of meeting with any Englishman who will take the pains that I have taken to understand him. His candle is bright, but shut up in a dark lantern. I lent him to a very sensible neighbour of mine; but his uncouth dialect spoiled all; and, before he had read him through, he was quite *ramfeezled*." This was written in August, 1787.

TO

WILLIAM SIMPSON,

OCHILTREE.

May, 1785.

I GAT your letter, winsome Willie;
Wi' gratefu' heart I thank you brawlie;
Tho' I maun sap't I wad be silly,
An' unco vain,
Should I believe, my coaxin' billie,
Your flatterin' strain.

But I'se believe ye kindly meant it,
I sud be laith to think ye hinted
Ironic satire, sidelins sklented
On my poor Musie;
Tho' in sic phraisin' terms ye've penn'd it,
I scarce excuse ye.

My senses wad be in a creel,
Should I but dare a hope to speel,
Wi' Allan, or wi' Gilbertfield,
The braes o' fame;
Or Fergusson, the writer chiel,
A deathless name.

(O Fergusson! thy glorious parts
Ill suited law's dry, musty arts!
My curse upon your whunstane hearts,
Ye E'nbrugh gentry!
The tythe o' what ye waste at cartes
Wad stow'd his pantry!)

Yet when a tale comes i' my head,
Or lasses gie my heart a screed,
As whiles they're like to be my deed
(O sad disease!)
I kittle up my rustic reed;
It gies me ease.

Auld Coila, now, may fidge fu' fain,
She's gotten poets o' her ain,
Chiels wha their chanters winna hain,
But tune their lays,
Till echoes a' resound again
Her weel-sung praise.

Nae poet thought her worth his while,
To set her name in measur'd style;
She lay like some unken'd-of isle
Beside New-Holland,
Or whare wild-meeting oceans boil
Besouth Magellan.

Ramsay an' famous Fergusson
Gied Forth an' Tay a lift aboon;
Yarrow an' Tweed, to monie a tune,
Owre Scotland rings,
While Irwin, Lugar, an' Doon,
Nae body sings.

Th' Illissus, Tiber, Thames, an' Seine,
Glide sweet in monie a tunefu' line!
But, Willie, set your fit to mine,
An' cock your crest,
We'll gar our streams an' burnies shine
Up wi' the best.

We'll sing auld Coila's plains an' fells,
Her moors red-brown wi' heather bells,
Her banks an' braes, her dens an' dells,
Where glorious Wallace
Aft bure the gree, as story tells,
Frae southron billies.

At Wallace' name, what Scottish blood
But boils up in a spring-tide flood!
Oft have our fearless fathers strode
By Wallace' side,
Still pressing onward, red-wat shod,
Or glorious dy'd.

O sweet are Coila's haugh's an' woods,
When lintwhites chant amang the buds,
And jinkin' hares, in amorous whids,
Their loves enjoy,
While thro' the braes the cushat croods
With wailfu' cry!

Ev'en winter bleak has charms to me
When winds rave thro' the naked tree;
Or frost on hills, of Ochiltree
Are hoary gray;
Or blinding drifts wild-furious flee,
Dark'ning the day!

O Nature! a' thy shaws an' forms
To feeling, pensive hearts hae charms!
Whether the summer kindly warms,
Wi' life an' light,
Or winter howls in gusty storms,
The lang, dark night!

The muse, nae Poet ever fand her,
'Till by himsel he learn'd to wander,
Adown some trotting burn's meander,
An' no think lang;
O sweet, to stray an' pensive ponder
A heart-felt sang!

The warly race may drudge an' drive,
Hog-shouther, jundie, stretch an' strive,
Let me fair Nature's descrive,
And I, wi' pleasure,
Shall let the busy, grumbling hive
Bum owre their treasure.

Fareweel, "my rhyme-composing brither!"
We've been owre lang unkenn'd to ither:
Now let us lay our heads thegither,
In love fraternal;
May Envy wallop in a tether,
Black fiend, infernal!

While Highlandmen hate tolls an' taxes;
While moorlan' herds like guid fat braxies;
While terra firma, on her axis
Diurnal turns,
Count on a friend, in faith an' practice,
In Robert Burns.

POSTSCRIPT.

My memory's no worth a preen;
I had amaist forgotten clean,
Ye bade me write you what they mean,
By this New Light,
'Bout which our herds sae aft hae been
Maist like to fight.

In days when mankind were but callans
At grammar, logic, an' sic talents,
They took nae pains their speech to balance,
Or rules to gie,
But spak their thoughts in plain, braid lallans,
Like you or me.

In thae auld times, they thought the moon,
Just like a sark, or pair o' shoon,
Wore by degrees, 'till her last roon,
Gaed past their viewing,
An' shortly after she was done,
They gat a new one.

This past for certain—undisputed;
It ne'er cam i' their heads to doubt it,
'Till chiels gat up an' wad confute it,
An' ca'd it wrang;
An' muckle din there was about it,
Baith loud an' lang.

Some herds, weel learn'd upo' the beuk,
Wad threap auld folk the thing misteuk;
For 'twas the auld moon turned a neuk,
An' out o' sight,
An' backlins-comin', to the leuk,
She grew mair bright.

This was deny'd, it was affirmed;
The herds an' hissels were alarmed:
The rev'rend gray-beards rav'd an' storm'd
That beardless laddies
Should think they better were inform'd
Than their auld daddies.

Frae less to mair it gaed to sticks;
Frae words an' aiths to clours an' nicks
An' monie a fallow gat his licks,
Wi' hearty crunt;
An' some, to learn them for their tricks,
Were hang'd an' brunt.

This game was play'd in monie lands,
An' Auld Light caddies bure sic hands,
That, faith, the youngsters took the sands
Wi' nimble shanks,
'Till lairds forbade, by strict commands,
Sic bluidy pranks.

But New-Light herds gat sic a cowe,
Folk thought them ruin'd stick-an'-stowe,
Till now amaist on every knowe,
Ye'll find ane plac'd;
An' some their New Light fair avow,
Just quite barefac'd.

Nae doubt the Auld-Light flocks are bleatin';
Their zealous herds are vex'd an' sweatin';
Mysel, I've even seen them greetin'
Wi' girnin' spite,
To hear the moon sae sadly lie'd on
By word an' write.

But shortly they will cowe the loons!
Some Auld-Light herds in neebor towns
Are mind't in things they ca' balloons,
To tak a flight,
An' stay ae month amang the moons
And see them right.

Guid observation they will gie them;
An' when the auld moon's gaun to lea'e them,
The hindmost shaird, they'll fetch it wi' them,
Just i' their pouch,
An' when the New-Light billies see them,
I think they'll crouch!

Sae, ye observe that a' this clatter
Is naething but a "moonshine matter;"
But tho' dull prose-folk Latin splatter
In logic tulzie,
I hope we bardies ken some better
Than mind sic brulzie.

William Simpson was, in the days of Burns, and is still, schoolmaster of the parish of Ochiltree; he has performed carefully the duties of his station, and lives respected by his scholars, some of whom are to be found in the east as well as in the west. Burns seems to have been partial to this class of men. He corresponded with David Sillar; he wrote anxiously to John Murdoch; William Nicol was long his companion, as well as correspondent; to Allan Masterton he was partial: he was intimate with the warm-hearted and enthusiastic James Gray. The present epistle shows what he thought of William Simpson; indeed, with all he was social and friendly who had any claim to education or information, save the unfortunate Dr. Hornbook. The natural modesty of the Poet is as visible in this epistle as it is elsewhere: as a rhymer, he aspires not to rank with Allan Ramsay, or Hamilton of Gilbertfield—

> "Or Fergusson, the writer chiel,
> A deathless name."

But he desires to sing of the hills and dales, and heroes and beauties of Kyle in his own rude country tongue. As Simpson is "a rhyme-composing brither," Burns speaks to him about his own aspirations; and, as he is a candidate for a kirk, he adds a postscript—a rather mystical one—on the heresy of the New Light.

It is likely that honest "John Ochiltree" of the old song took his name from Simpson's parish: and it is more than likely tha the imitable Edie Ochiltree of Scott's romance was baptized after the hero of the song: elsewhere, and in the strains of Burns, the name occurs.

> "The night it was a haly night,
> The day had been a haly day:
> Kilmarnock gleam'd wi' caunle-light,
> As hameward Girzie took her way.
> A man o' sin, black be his fa'!
> May he ne'er haly matin see—
> Met gracious Girzie, wal-awa!
> Amang the hills of Ochiltree."

TO J. LAPRAIK.

Sept. 13*th*, 1785.

Guid speed an' furder to you Johnny,
Guid health, hale han's, an' weather bonny;

Now when ye'er nickan down fu' canny
The staff o' bread,
May ye ne'er want a stoup o' bran'y
To clear your head.

May Boreas never thresh your rigs,
Nor kick your rickles aff their legs,
Sendin' the stuff o'er muirs an' haggs
Like drivin' wrack;
But may the tapmast grain that wags
Come to the sack.

I'm bizzie too, an' skelpin' at it,
But bitter, daudin' showers hae wat it,
Sae my auld stumpie pen I gat it
Wi' muckle wark,
An' took my jocteleg an' whatt it,
Like ony clark.

It's now twa month that I'm your debtor,
For your braw, nameless, dateless letter,
Abusin' me for harsh ill nature
On holy men,
While deil a hair yoursel ye're better,
But mair profane.

But let the kirk-folk ring their bells,
Let's sing about our noble sel's;
We'll cry nae jades frae heathen hills
To help, or roose us,
But browster wives an' whiskey stills,
They are the muses.

Your friendship, Sir, I winna quat it,
An' if ye mak' objections at it,
Then han' in nieve some day we'll knot it,
An' witness take,
An' when wi' usquabae we've wat it
It winna break.

But if the beast and branks be spar'd
Till kye be gaun without the herd,
An' a' the vittel in the yard,
An' theekit right,
I mean your ingle-side to guard
Ae winter night.

Then muse-inspirin' aqua-vitæ
Shall make us baith sae blythe an' witty,
Till ye forget ye're auld an' gatty,
An' be as canty
As ye were nine year less than thretty,
Sweet ane an' twenty!

But stooks are cowpit wi' the blast,
An' now the sinn keeks in the west,
Then I maun rin amang the rest
An' quat my chanter;
Sae I subscribe myself in haste
Your's, Rab the Ranter.

This third and last epistle of Burns to Lapraik was omitted in the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions, and might have been lost had not the Bard of Muirkirk, cheered by the success of his brother of Mossgiel, given his poetic works to the world, and printed the hasty effort of his friend by way of illustration. In looking over the volume of Lapraik, good sense, good feeling, and knowledge of men and manners will be found; but he wants warmth and energy. He sings a cold and lifeless strain, and has a knack of rhyme, and little else. The fame which Burns obtained deluged the Lowlands of Scotland with rustic verse; and I have heard men, who had the reputation of good sense, express surprise at their want of success. They did not observe that those homely bards wanted almost all for which Burns was distinguished. The muse with him was all life, bloom, and beauty, and had humor at will, and ready wit, and pathetic sentiment, and was, moreover, a leaper and a dancer. The muse of the competitors resembled a corse rather than a living thing; bloom and beauty had never belonged to her, and if she exhibited any symptoms of animation they were convulsive starts,

such as galvanism excites in a dead body.—"He carries us," says Campbell, speaking of Burns, "into the humble scenes of life: not to make us dole out our tribute of charitable compassion to paupers and cottagers, but to make us feel with them on equal terms: to make us enter into their passions and interests, and share our hearts with them, as with brothers and sisters of the human species."

The name of Rab the Ranter at the end of this poem seems adopted from Maggie Lauder:

"Maggie, quo' he, and by my bags,
I'm fidgin' fain to see thee;
Sit down by me, my bonny burd,
In troth I winna steer thee;
"For I'm a piper to my trade,
My name is Rab the Ranter;
The lasses loup as they were daft,
When I blaw up my chanter."

TO THE REV. JOHN M'MATH.

Sept. 17th, 1785.

While at the stook the shearers cow'r
To shun the bitter blaudin' show'r,
Or in gulravage rinnin' scow'r
To pass the time,
To you I dedicate the hour
In idle rhyme.

My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet
On gown, an' ban', an' douse black bonnet,
Is grown right eerie now she's done it,
Lest they should blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it
And anathem her.

I own 'twas rash, an' rather hardy,
That I, a simple, countra bardie,
Shou'd meddle wi' a pack sae sturdy,
Wha, if they ken me,
Can easy, wi' a single wordie,
Lowse h-ll upon me.

But I gae mad at their grimaces,
Their sighin' cantin' grace-proud faces,
Their three-mile prayers, an hauf-mile graces,
Their raxin' conscience,
Whase greed, revenge, an' pride disgraces,
Waur nor their nonsense.

There's Gaun,* misca't waur than a beast,
Wha has mair honor in his breast
Than mony scores as guid's the priest
Wha sae abus't him.
An' may a bard no crack his jest
What way they've use't him

See him, the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word an' deed,
An' shall his fame an' honor bleed
By worthless skellums,
An' not a muse erect her head
To cowe the blellums?

O Pope, had I thy satire's darts
To gie the rascals their deserts,
I'd rip their rotten, hollow hearts
An' tell aloud
Their jugglin' hocus-pocus arts
To cheat the crowd.

God knows, I'm no the thing I shou'd be,
Nor am I even the thing I cou'd be,
But twenty times, I rather wou'd be
An atheist clean,
Than under gospel colors hid be
Just for a screen.

An honest man may like a glass,
An honest man may like a lass,
But mean revenge, an' malice fause
He'll still disdain,
An' then cry zeal for gospel laws,
Like some we ken.

* Gavin Hamilton, Esq.

They take religion in their mouth ;
They talk o' mercy, grace an' truth,
For what?—to gie their malice skouth
On some puir wight,
An' hunt him down, o'er right an' ruth,
To ruin straight.

All hail, Religion! maid divine!
Pardon a muse sae mean as mine,
Who in her rough imperfect line,
Thus daurs to name thee ;
To stigmatize false friends of thine
Can ne'er defame thee.

Tho' blotch't an' foul wi' mony a stain,
An' far unworthy of thy train,
With trembling voice I tune my strain
To join with those,
Who boldly daur thy cause maintain
In spite o' foes :

In spite o' crowds, in spite o' mobs,
In spite of undermining jobs,
In spite o' dark banditti stabs
At worth an' merit,
By scoundrels, even wi' holy robes,
But hellish spirit.

O Ayr! my dear, my native ground,
Within thy presbytereal bound
A candid lib'ral band is found
Of public teachers,
As men, as Christians too, renown'd,
An' manly preachers.

Sir, in that circle you are nam'd ;
Sir, in that circle you are fam'd ;
An some, by whom your doctrine's blam'd
(Which gies you honor)
Even Sir, by them your heart's esteem'd.
An' winning manner.

Pardon this freedom I have ta'en,
An' if impertinent I've been,
Impute it not, good Sir, in ane
Whase heart ne'er wrang'd ye,
But to his utmost would befriend
Ought that belang'd ye.

It is, perhaps, enough to say of this epistle that the gentleman to whom it is addressed was a worthy minister in the west of Scotland, who believed and preached the New Light: and that it was written as an envelope to "Holy Willie's Prayer," of which it seems this reverend person had requested a copy. It fixes the limit, at least, of the religious controversy, and shows that the poet was weary of working in the cause of the children of the New Light.

"My musie, tir'd wi' mony a sonnet
On gown, an' ban', an' douse black bonnet,
Is grown right eerie now she's done it,
Lest they shou'd blame her,
An' rouse their holy thunder on it
And anathem her."

TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785.

Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi' bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion,
Has broken nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na' whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,
And never miss't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin',
Baith snell and keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary winter comin' fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
'Till, crash! the cruel coulter past
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,
An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,
For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess an' fear.

"The charm," says Jeffrey "of the fine lines, written on turning up a mouse's nest with the plough, will be found to consist in the simple tenderness of the delineation." It has higher beauties, viz. the poet's regret that man's power has broken the social union of nature, and induces a "fellow-mortal" to fly in terror from his face, and the pathetic reference to his own condition—he shrinks from the contemplation of the present, and he dreads the future. The field on the farm of Mossgiel is still pointed out and visited in which Burns composed this grand moral poem: he loved to muse at the plough, and when the day was fine he usually added a few verses to his works in hand or imagined others. I have seen "The Mouse" sharply criticized for that very simplicity of delineation which Jeffrey observed in it, and the fine verse commencing with

"That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,"

quoted as a proof of weakness and want of vigor of expression. My eloquent friend Carlyle has spoken with feeling and understanding on this point. "A virtue as of mountain breezes, and of green fields, dwells in his poetry; it is redolent of natural life, and hardy, natural man. There is a decisive strength in him, and yet a sweet native gracefulness: he is tender, and he is vehement; yet without constraint or too visible effort; he melts the heart, or inflames it with a power which seems habitual and familiar to him. Observe with what a prompt and eager force he grasps his subject, be it what it may! How he fixes, as it were, the full image of the matter in his eye—full and clear in every lineament; and catches the real type and essence of it, amid a thousand accidents and superficial circumstances, no one of which misleads him."

"It required," remarks Wilson, "less magnanimity in one of the old Romans to lay aside the consular gown and return to the plough—for then such was the spirit of the whole nation—than in Burns, suddenly invested with the garb of glory, to withdraw from the gaze of admiration and wonder; and, as if genius had never tuned his heart-strings to poetry, nor inspiration touched his lips with fire, to take his place again on the corn-field among the reapers; or, in his own person, to realize the picture of the cotter, which years before he had drawn at his work, and which, when repeated by him in the silence of nature to his brother, had melted the strong man into tears."

SCOTCH DRINK.

"Gie him strong drink, until he wink,
That's sinking in despair;
An' liquor guid to fire his bluid,
That's prest wi' grief an' care;
There let him bouse, an' deep carouse,
Wi' bumpers flowing o'er,
Till he forgets his loves or debts,
An' minds his griefs no more."

SOLOMON'S PROVERB, xxxi. 6, 7.

LET other poets raise a fracas
'Bout vines, an' wines, an' dru'ken Bacchus,
An' crabbit names an' stories wrack us,
An' grate our lug,
I sing the juice Scotch bear can mak us,
In glass or jug.

O thou, my Muse! guid auld Scotch drink;
Whether thro' wimplin' worms thou jink,
Or, richly brown, ream o'er the brink,
In glorious faem,
Inspire me, till I lisp an' wink,
To sing thy name!

Let husky wheat the haughs adorn,
An' aits set up their awnie horn,
An' pease an' beans, at e'en or morn,
Perfume the plain,
Leeze me on thee, John Barleycorn,
Thou king o' grain!

On thee aft Scotland chows her cood,
In souple scones, the wale o' food!
Or tumblin' in the boilin' flood
Wi' kail an' beef;
But when thou pours thy strong heart's blood,
There thou shines chief.

Food fills the wame, an' keeps us livin';
Tho' life's a gift no worth receivin'
When heavy dragg'd wi' pine an' grievin';
But, oil'd by thee,
The wheels o' life gae down-hill, scrievin',
Wi' rattlin' glee.

Thou clears the head o' doited Lear;
Thou cheers the heart o' drooping Care;
Thou strings the nerves o' Labor sair,
At's weary toil;
Thou even brightens dark Despair
Wi' gloomy smile.

Aft' clad in massy, siller weed,
Wi' gentles thou erects thy head;
Yet humbly kind in time o' need,
The poor man's wine,
His wee drap parritch, or his bread,
Thou kitchens fine.

Thou art the life o' public haunts;
But thee, what were our fairs and rants?
Ev'n godly meetings o' the saunts,
By thee inspir'd,
When gaping they besiege the tents,
Are doubly fir'd.

That merry night we get the corn in,
O sweetly then thou reams the horn in!
Or reekin' on a new-year morning
In cog or bicker,
An' just a wee drap sp'ritual burn in,
An' gusty sucker!

When Vulcan gies his bellows breath,
An' ploughmen gather wi' their graith,
O rare! to see thee fizz an' freath
I' th' lugget caup!
Then Burnewin comes on like death
At ev'ry chap.

Nae mercy, then, for airn or steel ;
The brawnie, bainie, ploughman chiel,
Brings hard owrehip, wi' sturdy wheel,
The strong forehammer,
Till block an' studdie ring an' reel
Wi' dinsome clamor.

When skirlin' weanies see the light,
Thou maks the gossips clatter bright,
How fumblin' cuifs their dearies slight ;
Wae worth the name !
Nae howdie gets a social night,
Or plack frae them.

When neebors anger at a plea,
An' just as wud as wud can be,
How easy can the barley-bree
Cement the quarrel !
It's aye the cheapest lawyer's fee,
To taste the barrel.

Alake ! that e'er my Muse has reason
To wyte her countrymen wi' treason !
But monie daily weet their weason
Wi' liquors nice,
An' hardly, in a winter's season,
E'er spier her price.

Wae worth that brandy, burning trash !
Fell source o' monie a pain an' brash !
Twins monie a poor, doylt, dru'ken hash,
O' half his days ;
An' sends, beside, auld Scotland's cash
To her warst faes.

Ye Scots, wha wish auld Scotland well,
Ye chief, to you my tale I tell,
Poor plackless devils like mysel,
It sets you ill,
Wi' bitter, dearthfu' wines to mell,
Or foreign gill.

May gravels round his blether wrench,
An' gouts torment him inch by inch,
Wha twists his gruntle wi' a glunch
O' sour disdain,
Out owre a glass o' whiskey punch
Wi' honest men!

O whiskey! soul o' plays an' pranks!
Accept a Bardie's gratefu' thanks!
When wanting thee, what tuneless cranks
Are my poor verses!
Thou comes——they rattle i' their ranks
At ither's a—!

Thee Ferintosh! O sadly lost!
Scotland lament frae coast to coast!
Now colic grips, an' barkin' hoast,
May kill us a';
For loyal Forbes' charter'd boast,
Is ta'en awa!

Thae curst horse-leeches o' th' Excise,
Wha mak the whiskey stells their prize!
Haud up thy han', Deil! ance, twice, thrice!
There, seize the blinkers!
An' bake them up in brunstane pies
For poor d—n'd drinkers.

Fortune! if thou'll but gie me still
Hale breeks, a scone, an' whiskey gill,
An' rowth o' rhyme to rave at will,
Tak' a' the rest,
An' deal't about as thy blind skill
Directs thee best.

Scotch drink is a favorite topic with the northern poets; three instances may be given of poems in its praise by our old minstrels. The earliest of these is good classical Scotch, and named "Allane-a-Maut." It begins thus:—

"Quhen he wes zung, and cled in grene,
Haifand his hair about his ene,
Baith men and women did him mene;
Quhen he grew on zon hillis hie—
Quhy sowld not Allane honorit be?"

The second is in a homelier dialect, and is as well known in the north of England as in the south of Scotland;—it is also called "Allan-o-Maut."

"Gude Allan-o-Maut was ance ca'd bear,
And he was cadged frae wa' to wear,
And dragglet wi' muck and syne wi' rain,
Till he diet and came to life again."

The name of the third is "John Barleycorn;" it is in the ballad style, and has, as will be shown, been successfully imitated by Burns. Fergusson, in his "Drink Eclogue," makes brandy and whiskey with little propriety—in an allegorical sense—hold conversation with an Edinburgh hostess:—

"Twa chappin' bottles panged wi' liquor fu',
Brandy the tane, the tither whiskey blue,
Grew cankered, for the twa were het within,
And het-skinned fouk to flytin soon begin;
The Frenchman fizzed and first wad foot the field,
While haughty Scotsman scorned to beenge or yield."

Brandy assumes a lordly tone; speaks with scorn of the native cordial, and boasts how he chased hysterics from ladies, and cheered even priests in the closet instead of prayers. Whiskey, calmly and mildly—says he inspired poets with song, and made Allan Ramsay's chaunter.

"chirm fu' clear,
Life to the soul and music to the ear."

Brandy appeals to the landlady, who settles the matter at once. The Excise, she observes, has hindered the importation of the right Cogniac, and that the spirit in the bottle, which gives itself such aristocratic airs, is

"Whiskey, tinctured with the saffron's dye."

"I here enclose you," says Burns, on the 20th of March, 1786, to one of his correspondents, "my 'Scotch Drink.' I hope, some time before we hear the gowk, to have the pleasure of seeing you at Kilmarnock, when I intend we shall have a gill between us, in a mutchkin stoup."

THE AUTHOR'S
EARNEST CRY AND PRAYER
TO THE
SCOTCH REPRESENTATIVES
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS.

"Dearest of distillation! last and best!——
——How art thou lost!———"
PARODY ON MILTON.

YE Irish lords, ye knights an' squires,
Wha represent our brughs an' shires,
An' doucely manage our affairs
In parliament,
To you a simple Bardie's prayers
Are humbly sent.

Alas! my roupet Muse is hearse!
Your honor's heart wi' grief 'twad pierce,
To see her sittin' on her a—
Low i' the dust,
An' scriechin' out prosaic verse,
An' like to brust!

Tell them wha hae the chief direction,
Scotland an' me's in great affliction,
E'er sin' they laid that curst restriction
On aqua vitæ;
An' rouse them up to strong conviction,
An' move their pity.

Stand forth, an' tell yon Premier youth,
The honest, open, naked truth:
Tell him o' mine an' Scotland's drouth,
His servants humble:
The muckle devil blaw ye south,
If ye dissemble!

Does ony great man glunch an' gloom?
Speak out, an' never fash your thumb!
Let posts an' pensions sink or soom
Wi' them wha grant 'em:
If honestly they canna come,
Far better want 'em.

In gath'rin votes you were na slack;
Now stand as tightly by your tack;
Ne'er claw your lug, an' fidge your back,
An' hum an' haw;
But raise your arm, an' tell your crack
Before them a'.

Paint Scotland greeting owre her thrissle,
Her mutchkin stoup as toom's a whissle;
An' d-mn'd excisemen in a bussle,
Seizin' a stell,
Triumphant crushin't like a mussel
Or lampit shell.

Then on the tither hand present her,
A blackguard smuggler, right behint her,
An' cheek-for-chow, a chuffie vintner,
Colleaguing join,
Picking her pouch as bare as winter
Of a' kind coin.

Is there, that bears the name o' Scot,
But feels his heart's bluid rising hot,
To see his poor auld mither's pot
Thus dung in staves,
An' plunder'd o' her hindmost groat
By gallows knaves?

Alas! I'm but a nameless wight,
Trode i' the mire out o' sight!
But could I like Montgomeries fight,
Or gab like Boswell,
There's some sark-necks I wad draw tight,
An' tie some hose well.

God bless your honors, can ye see't,
The kind, auld, cantie carlin greet,
An' no get warmly to your feet,
An' gar them hear it,
An' tell them with a patriot heat,
Ye winna bear it?

Some o' you nicely ken the laws,
To round the period an' pause,
An' wi' rhetoric clause on clause
To mak harangues;
Then echo thro' Saint Stephen's wa's
Auld Scotland's wrangs.

Dempster, a true blue Scot I'se warran';
Thee, aith-detesting, chaste Kilkerran;*
An' that glib-gabbet Highland baron,
The Laird o' Graham;†
An' ane, a chap that's d-mn'd auldfarran,
Dundas his name.

Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie;
True Campbells, Frederick an' Ilay;
An' Livingstone, the bauld Sir Willlie;
An' monie ithers,
Whom auld Demosthenes or Tully
Might own for brithers.

Arouse, my boys! exert your mettle,
To get auld Scotland back her kettle;
Or faith! I'll wad my new pleugh-pettle,
Ye'll see't or lang,
She'll teach you, wi' a reekin' whittle,
Anither sang.

This while she's been in crankous mood,
Her lost militia fir'd her bluid;
(Deil na they never mair do guid,
Play'd her that pliskie!)
An' now she's like to rin red-wud
About her whiskey.

* Sir Adam Ferguson. † The Duke of Montrose.

An' L—d, if ance they pit her till't,
Her tartan petticoat she'll kilt,
An' durk an' pistol at her belt,
She'll tak the streets,
An' rin her whittle to the hilt,
I' th' first she meets!

For G-d sake, sirs! then speak her fair,
An' straik her cannie wi' the hair,
An' to the muckle house repair,
Wi' instant speed,
An' strive, wi' a' your wit and lear,
To get remead.

Yon ill-tongu'd tinkler, Charlie Fox,
May taunt you wi' his jeers an' mocks;
But gie him 't het, my hearty cocks!
E'en cowe the cadie!
An' send him to his dicing box
An' sportin' lady.

Tell you guid bluid o' auld Boconnock's
I'll be his debt twa mashlum bonnocks,
An' drink his health in auld Nanse Tinnock's*
Nine times a-week,
If he some scheme, like tea an' winnocks,
Wad kindly seek.

Could he some commutation broach,
I'll pledge my aith in guid braid Scotch,
He need na fear their foul reproach
Nor erudition,
Yon mixtie-maxtie queer hotch-potch,
The Coalition.

Auld Scotland has a raucle tongue;
She's just a devil wi' a rung;
An' if she promise auld or young
To tak their part,

* A worthy old hostess of the author's in Mauchline, where he sometimes studies politics over a glass of guid auld Scotch drink.

Tho' by the neck she should be strung,
She'll no desert.

An' now, ye chosen Five-and-Forty,
May still your mither's heart support ye;
Then, though a minister grow dorty,
An' kick your place,
Ye'll snap your fingers, poor an' hearty,
Before his face.

God bless your honors a' your days,
Wi' sowps o' kail and brats o' claise,
In spite o' a' the thievish kaes,
That haunt St. Jamie's!
Your humble Poet sings an' prays
While Rab his name is.

POSTSCRIPT.

Let half-starv'd slaves in warmer skies
Seek future wines, rich clust'ring, rise;
Their lot auld Scotland ne'er envies,
But blythe and frisky,
She eyes her freeborn, martial boys
Tak aff their whiskey.

What tho' their Phœbus kinder warms,
While fragrance blooms and beauty charms!
When wretches range, in famish'd swarms,
The scented groves,
Or hounded forth, dishonor arms
In hungry droves.

Their gun's a burden on their shouther;
They downa bide the stink o' powther;
Their bauldest thought's a hank'ring swither
To stan' or rin,
Till skelp—a shot—they're aff, a' throwther,
To save their skin.

But bring a Scotsman frae his hill,
Clap in his cheek a Highland gill,
Say, such is royal George's will,
An' there's the foe,
He has nae thought but how to kill
Twa at a blow.

Nae cauld, faint-hearted doubtings tease him;
Death comes, wi' fearless eye he sees him;
Wi' bluidy han' a welcome gies him;
An, when he fa's,
His latest draught o' breathin' lea'es him
In faint huzzas!

Sages their solemn een may steek,
An' raise a philosophic reek,
An' physically causes seek,
In clime an' season;
But tell me whiskey's name in Greek,
I'll tell the reason.

Scotland, my auld, respected mither!
Tho' whiles ye moistify your leather,
Till whare ye sit, on craps o' heather
Ye tine your dam;
Freedom and whiskey gang thegither!—
Tak aff your dram!

"This poem was written," says Burns, "before the act anent the Scotch Distilleries of Session 1786, for which Scotland and the author return their most grateful thanks." After the verse commencing—

"Erskine, a spunkie Norland billie,"

there appears in Burns' book of manuscripts a verse which has occasioned some conjecture concerning the cause of its omission:

"Thee, sodger Hugh, my watchman stented,
If bardies e'er are represented:
I ken if that yere sword were wanted,
Ye'd lend your hand;
But when there's aught to say anent it,
Ye're at a stand."

Perhaps the Poet reflected that the future Earl of Eglinton might dislike to be described as sharp of sword and slack of speech. —"Why this was left out in printing," says Gilbert Burns, "does not appear. The noble Earl will not be sorry to see this notice of him, familiar though it be, by a bard whose genius he admired, and whose fate he lamented." The persons mentioned in the poem are "common and popular." The "crankous mood" of old Scotland respecting her lost militia is well and truly described: had the poet lived till 1798, he would have seen her in an equally crankous mood on obtaining her militia: riots took place in several parts of the country: houses were attacked, and the lives of the schoolmasters threatened, on whom government unwisely laid the duty of making out the list of persons eligible to serve. Two hundred rustics, with guns and pitchforks, marched against the house of Sir Robert Grierson: a detachment of volunteers hastened from Dumfries for its protection; nor did the besiegers disperse till one of the volunteers in a parly showed them four-and-twenty round of ball-cartridge, and made one of them feel the balls with his finger. On this one of the rustic leaders exclaimed, "G—d, lads, this is gaun to be serious," and dispersed his men.

The sentiments of David Sillar on whiskey will show how much he differed in opinion, as well as in poetic power, with his brother bard:—

"It taks the best bits o' the fiel;
It robs our markets o' gude meal;
It aft-times maks the simple chiel
Baith fa' an' swagger,
An' turns him aft a ne'er-do-weel
Or randy beggar.

"I've seen, an' aft my heart's been wae.
Unthinkin' mortals led astray:
By whiskey made a certain prey,
First to dejection,
Then led by bards the beaten way
To their destruction.

"O' a' ye lords wha rule the nation,
An' commoners o' every station,
Ye'll send the kintra to damnation,
An' that ye'll see
Whene'er ye grant the distillation
O' curst whiskie."

ADDRESS TO THE UNCO GUID,

OR THE

RIGIDLY RIGHTEOUS.

"My son, these maxims make a rule,
And lump them ay thegither;
The Rigid Righteous is a fool,
The Rigid Wise anither;
The cleanest corn that e'er was dight
May hae some pyles o' caff in;
So ne'er a fellow-creature slight
For random fits o' daffin."

SOLOMON.—Eccles. ch. vii. ver. 16.

I.

O YE wha are sae guid yoursel,
Sae pious and sae holy,
Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebours' fauts and folly!
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supply'd wi' store o' water,
The heaped happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter.

II.

Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaikit Folly's portals;
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances.

III.

Ye see your state wi' theirs compar'd,
And shudder at the niffer,
But cast a moment's fair regard,
What maks the mighty differ?
Discount what scant occasion gave,
That purity ye pride in,
And (what's aft mair than a' the lave)
Your better art o' hiding.

IV.

Think, when your castigated pulse
Gies now and then a wallop,
What ragings must his veins convulse,
That still eternal gallop:
Wi' wind and tide fair i' your tail,
Right on ye scud your sea-way;
But in the teeth o' baith to sail,
It makes an unco lee-way.

V.

See social life and glee sit down,
All joyous and unthinking,
'Till, quite transmogrify'd, they're grown
Debauchery and drinking:
O would they stay to calculate
Th' eternal consequences;
Or your more dreaded hell to state,
D-mnation of expences!

VI.

Ye high, exalted, virtuous dames,
Ty'd up in godly laces,
Before ye gie poor frailty names,
Suppose a change o' cases;
A dear lov'd lad, convenience snug,
A treacherous inclination—
But, let me whisper, i' your lug,
Ye're aiblins nae temptation.

VII.

Then gently scan your brother man,
Still gentler sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang
To step aside is human:
One point must still be greatly dark,
The moving why they do it:
And just as lamely can ye mark,
How far perhaps they rue it.

VIII.

Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
Decidedly can try us,
He knows each chord—its various tone,
Each spring—its various bias:
Then at the balance let's be mute,
We never can adjust it;
What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted.

The germ of this Address to the Rigidly Righteous is to be found in the early prose memoranda of the poet.—"Let any one," he says, "of the strictest character for regularity of conduct amongst us, examine impartially how many vices he has never been guilty of, not from any care or vigilance, but for want of opportunity; how many of the weaknesses of mankind he has escaped, because he was out of the line of such temptation; and how much he is indebted to the world's good opinion, because the world does not know all: I say that any man who can thus think, will scan the failings, nay, the faults and crimes of mankind around him, with a brother's eye." Who the high, exalted, virtuous dames and holy Willies were, to whom the poem was addressed, has not been told us. Perhaps they belonged to the chosen-swatch—with screwed-up, grace-proud faces—seen by the Bard, when, with Fun at his elbow, he visited the "Holy Fair."

"It is the privilege of poetic genius," says Wordsworth, "to catch, under certain restrictions—of which, perhaps, at the time of its being exerted, it is but dimly conscious—a spirit of pleas-

ure, wherever it can be found, in the walks of nature, and in the business of men. The Poet, trusting to primary instincts, luxuriates amid the felicities of love and wine, and is enraptured while he describes the fairer aspects of war: nor does he shrink from the company of the passion of love, though immoderate—from convivial pleasure, though intemperate—nor from the presence of war, though savage, and recognised as the handmaid of destruction. Frequently and admirably has Burns given way to these impulses of nature, both with reference to himself and in describing the condition of others."

To unmask hypocrisy was a favorite pursuit of the muse of Burns, and it must be owned she was sometimes successful. Not content with exposing others, the Poet barred his own bosom and displayed his errors to the world with a confidence which has been ill requited. His confessions of frailty have supplied texts to preach from against the follies of poets—men of whom one, who had a right to speak, has said,—

> "In naked feeling and in aching pride,
> They bear the unbroken blast on every side."

This has been pushed so far in the story of Burns, that a clergyman intimated from the pulpit that heaven, at the Poet's funeral, manifested its wrath in "thunder, lightning, and in rain." Instead of this, however, July sent one of her brightest and balmiest days.

TAM SAMSON'S* ELEGY,

"An honest man's the noblest work of God."
POPE.

HAS auld Kilmarnock seen the deil?
Or great M'Kinlay† thrawn his heel!
Or Robinson‡ again grown weel,
To preach an' read?
"Na, waur than a'!" cries ilka chiel,
Tam Samson's dead.

* When this worthy old sportsman went out last muirfowl season, he supposed it was to be, in Ossian's phrase, "the last of his fields;" and expressed an ardent wish to die and be buried in the muirs. On this hint the author composed his elegy and epitaph.

† A preacher, a great favorite with the million. *Vide* the Ordination, stanza II.

‡ Another preacher, an equal favorite with the few, who was at that time ailing. For him also see the Ordination, stanza IX.

Kilmarnock lang may grunt an' grane,
An' sigh, an' sob, an' greet her lane,
An' cleed her bairns, man, wife, an' wean,
In mourning weed;
To death, she 's dearly paid the kane,
Tam Samson 's dead!

The brethren o' the mystic level
May hing their head in woefu' bevel,
While by their nose the tears will revel,
Like ony bead;
Death's gien the lodge an unco devel,
Tam Samson's dead!

When Winter muffles up his cloak,
And binds the mire like a rock;
When to the lochs the curlers flock,
Wi' gleesome speed,
Wha will they station at the cock,
Tam Samson 's dead?

He was the king o' a' the core,
To guard, or draw, or wick a bore,
Or up the rink like Jehu roar
In time o' need;
But now he lags on death's hog-score,
Tam Samson's dead!

Now safe the stately sawmont sail,
And trouts be-dropp'd wi' crimson hail,
And eels weel kenn'd for souple tail,
And geds for greed,
Since dark in death's fish-creel we wail
Tam Samson dead!

Rejoice, ye birring paitricks a';
Ye cootie moorcocks, crousely craw;
Ye maukins cock your fud fu' braw,
Withouten dread;
Your mortal fae is now awa',
Tam Samson 's dead!

That woefu' morn be ever mourn'd
Saw him in shootin' graith adorn'd,
While pointers round impatient burn'd,
Frae couples freed;
But, Och! he gaed and ne'er return'd!
Tam Samson 's dead!

In vain auld age his body batters;
In vain the gout his ancles fetters;
In vain the burns cam' down like waters,
An acre braid!
Now ev'ry auld wife, greetin', clatters,
Tam Samson 's dead!

Owre many a weary hag he limpit,
An' ay the tither shot he thumpit,
Till coward Death behind him jumpit,
Wi' deadly feide;
Now he proclaims, wi' tout o' trumpet,
Tam Samson 's dead!

When at his heart he felt the dagger,
He reel'd his wonted bottle-swagger,
But yet he drew the mortal trigger
Wi' weel-aim'd heed;
"L—d, five!" he cry'd, an' owre did stagger;
Tam Samson 's dead!

Ilk hoary hunter mourn'd a brither;
Ilk sportsman youth bemoan'd a father;
Yon auld gray stane, amang the heather,
Marks out his head,
Whare Burns has wrote, in rhyming blether,
Tam Samson 's dead!

There low he lies, in lasting rest;
Perhaps upon his mould'ring breast
Some spitefu' muirfowl bigs her nest,
To hatch an' breed;
Alas! nae mair he 'll them molest!
Tam Samson 's dead!

When August winds the heather wave,
And sportsmen wander by yon grave,
Three volleys let his mem'ry crave
O' pouther an' lead,
'Till Echo answer frae her cave
Tam Samson's dead!

Heav'n rest his saul, whare'er he be!
Is th' wish o' mony mae than me;
He had twa fauts, or maybe three,
Yet what remead?
Ae social, honest man want we:
Tam Samson's dead!

EPITAPH.

Tam Samson's weel worn clay here lies,
Ye canting zealots spare him!
If honest worth in heaven rise,
Ye 'll mend or ye win near him.

PER CONTRA.

Go, Fame, an' canter like a filly
Thro' a' the streets an' neuks o' Killie,*
Tell ev'ry social, honest billie
To cease his grievin',
For yet, unskaith'd by Death's gleg gullie,
Tam Samson's livin'.

"When this worthy old sportsman," says the Poet, in a note, "went out last muirfowl season, he supposed it was to be, in Ossian's phrase 'the last of his fields,' and expressed an ardent wish to die and be buried in the muirs. On this hint the Author composed his elegy and epitaph." No poet ever emblazoned

* Killie is a phrase the country-folks sometimes use for Kilmarnock.

fact with fiction more happily than Burns: the hero of this poem was a country sportsman, who loved curling on the ice in winter, and shooting on the moors in the season. When no longer able to

> "Guard or draw a wick or bore,
> Or up the rink like Jehu roar
> In time of need;"

or march over hill and hagg in quest of

> "Paitricks, teal, moor-pouts, and plivers."

he loved to lie on the lang-settle, and listen to the deeds of others on field and flood; and when a good tale was told, he would cry "Hech man! three at a shot; that was famous!" Some one informed Tam that Burns had written a poem—"a gay queer ane"—concerning him: he sent for the Bard, and in something like wrath, requested to hear it: he smiled grimly at the relation of his exploits, and then cried out, "I'm no dead yet, Robin—I'm worth ten dead fowk: wherefore should ye say that I am dead?" Burns took the hint, retired to the window for a minute's space or so, and coming back, recited the Per Contra, "Go, fame, an' canter like a filly." Tam was so delighted that he rose unconsciously, rubbed his hands, and exclaimed, "That'll do—ha! ha!—that'll do!" The poetic epitaph is inscribed on his grave-stone in the church-yard of Kilmarnock; he survived the writing of the elegy and—the hand that wrote it.

SECOND EPISTLE

TO

DAVIE,

A BROTHER POET.

AULD NIBOR,

I'm three times doubly o'er your debtor,
For your auld-farrent, frien'ly letter;
Tho' I maun say't, I doubt ye flatter,
Ye speak sae fair,
For my puir, silly, rhymin' clatter
Some less maun sair.

Hale be your heart, hale be your fiddle;
Lang may your elbuck jink and diddle,
To cheer you thro' the weary widdle
O' war'ly cares,
Till bairns' bairns kindly cuddle
Your auld, gray hairs.

But Davie, lad, I'm red ye're glaikit;
I'm tauld the Muse ye hae negleckit;
An' gif it's sae, ye sud be licket
Until ye fyke;
Sic hauns as you sud ne'er be faiket,
Be hain't wha like.

For me, I'm on Parnassus' brink,
Rivin' the words to gar them clink;
Whyles daez't wi' love, whyles daez't wi' drink,
Wi' jads or masons;
An' whyles, but ay owre late, I think
Braw sober lessons.

Of a' the thoughtless sons o' man,
Commen' me to the Bardie clan;
Except it be some idle plan
O' rhymin' clink,
The devil-haet, that I sud ban,
They ever think.

Nae thought, nae view, nae scheme o' livin',
Nae cares to gie us joy or grievin';
But just the pouchie put the nieve in,
An' while aught's there,
Then hiltie sikltie, we gae scrievin',
An' fash nae mair.

Leeze me on rhyme! it's aye a treasure
My chief, amaist my only pleasure,
At hame, a-fiel', at wark, or leisure,
The Muse, poor hizzie!
Tho' rough an' raploch be her measure,
She's seldom lazy.

Haud to the Muse, my dainty Davie:
The warl' may play you monie a shavie;
But for the Muse, she'll never leave ye,
Tho' e'er sae puir,
Na, even tho' limpin' wi' the spavie
Frae door tae door.

David Sillar prefixed this Epistle to his poems, published at Kilmarnock, in the year 1789. He was, for some time, the chosen companion of Burns, and seems to have confided much to him in matters of love-making. David was acquainted with the nursery maid of Stair, Margaret Orr by name, and it is to this young woman that Burns alludes, when he says, in his first Epistle,

"Ye have your Meg, your dearest part,
And I my darling Jean."

The bard of Mossgiel accompanied his friend on one of those visits, and, as some of the lasses sung well, he gave them one or two of his songs. Mrs. Stewart happened, by chance, to see one of these compositions, and was so much struck with its grace and tenderness, that she desired to be told when the Author visited Stair again. It was in this way that his acquaintance with that accomplished lady began: and many years afterwards the Poet told Miss Stewart that, when requested to walk into the drawing-room, to be introduced to her mother, he suffered more than he would like to suffer again.—"Indeed," he said, "I endured such palpitation of heart as I never after experienced among

'Lords and ladies of high degree.'"

This introduction is supposed to have taken place in 1784; and if this date be correct, Mrs. Stewart must be, hereafter, regarded as one of the first in Ayrshire, above the Poet's rank in life, who perceived his genius and treated him with respect.

Of the merits of "Dainty Davie," as a poet, the reader may judge from a few of the verses of his Epistle to Burns:—

"I ne'er was muckle gi'en to praisin',
Or else ye might be sure o' fraisin';
For trouth, I think, in solid reason,
Your kintra reed
Plays sweet as Robin Fergusson,
Or his on Tweed.

"But tho' the tout o' fame may please you,
Let na the flatt'rin' ghaist o'erheeze you,
Ni'er flyte nor fraise to gar fock roose you;
For men o' skill,
When ye write weel, will always praise you
Out o' gude will.

"Great numbers on this earthly ba'
As soon as death gies them the ca',
Permitted are to slide awa',
An' straught forgot.
Forbid that this should ever fa'
To be your lot.

"I ever had an anxious wish,
Forgive me, Heav'n! if 'twas amiss,
That fame in life my name would bliss,
An' kindly save
It from the cruel tyrant's crush
Beyond the grave."

LAMENT,

OCCASIONED BY THE UNFORTUNATE ISSUE

OF A

FRIEND'S AMOUR.

"Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself!
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe."

HOME.

I.

O THOU pale orb, that silent shines,
While care-untroubled mortals sleep!
Thou seest a wretch who inly pines,
And wanders here to wail and weep!
With woe I nightly vigils keep,
Beneath thy wan, unwarming beam;
And mourn, in lamentation deep,
How life and love are all a dream.

II.

I joyless view thy rays adorn
The faintly marked distant hill:
I joyless view thy trembling horn,
Reflected in the gurgling rill:
My fondly-fluttering heart, be still!
Thou busy pow'r, remembrance, cease!
Ah! must the agonizing thrill
For ever bar returning peace!

III.

No idly-feign'd poetic pains,
My sad, love-lorn lamentings claim;
No shepherd's pipe—Arcadian strains;
No fabled tortures, quaint and tame:
The plighted faith; the mutual flame;
The oft-attested Pow'rs above;
The promis'd father's tender name;
These were the pledges of my love!

IV.

Encircled in her clasping arms,
How have the raptur'd moments flown!
How have I wish'd for fortune's charms,
For her dear sake, and her's alone!
And must I think it!—is she gone,
My secret heart's exulting boast?
And does she heedless hear my groan?
And is she ever, ever lost?

V.

Oh! can she bear so base a heart,
So lost to honor, lost to truth,
As from the fondest lover part,
The plighted husband of her youth!
Alas! life's path may be unsmooth!
Her way may lie thro' rough distress!
Then, who her pangs and pains will soothe,
Her sorrows share, and make them less?

VI.

Ye winged hours that o'er us past,
Enraptur'd more, the more enjoy'd,
Your dear remembrance in my breast,
My fondly-treasur'd thoughts employ'd.
That breast, how dreary now, and void,
For her too scanty once of room!
Ev'n ev'ry ray of hope destroy'd,
And not a wish to gild the gloom!

VII.

The morn that warns th' approaching day,
Awakes me up to toil and woe:
I see the hours in long array,
That I must suffer, lingering, slow.
Full many a pang, and many a throe,
Keen recollection's direful train,
Must wring my soul, ere Phœbus, low,
Shall kiss the distant, western main.

VIII.

And when my nightly couch I try,
Sore-harass'd out with care and grief,
My toil-beat nerves, and tear-worn eye,
Keep watchings with the nightly thief:
Or if I slumber, fancy, chief,
Reigns haggard-wild, in sore affright:
Ev'n day, all-bitter, brings relief,
From such a horror-breathing night.

IX.

O! thou bright queen, who o'er th' expanse,
Now highest reign'st with boundless sway!
Oft has thy silent-marking glance
Observ'd us, fondly wand'ring, stray!
The time, unheeded, sped away,
While love's luxurious pulse beat high,
Beneath thy silver-gleaming ray,
To mark the mutual kindling eye.

X.

Oh! scenes in strong remembrance set!
Scenes never, never to return!
Scenes, if in stupor I forget,
Again I feel, again I burn!
From ev'ry joy and pleasure torn,
Life's weary vale I'll wander thro';
And hopeless, comfortless, I'll mourn
A faithless woman's broken vow.

The history of this touching poem has been related by several writers: Burns himself says to Dr. Moore, "This was a most melancholy affair, which I cannot yet bear to reflect on, and had very nearly given me one or two of the principal qualifications for a place among those who have lost the chart and mistaken the reckoning of rationality. I gave up my part of my farm to my brother—in truth, it was only nominally mine—and made what little preparation was in my power for Jamaica. As soon as I was was master of nine guineas, the price of wafting me to the torrid zone, I took a steerage passage in the first ship that was to sail from the Clyde; for—

'Hungry ruin had me in the wind.'

I had for some days been skulking from covert to covert under all the terrors of a jail: as some ill-advised people had uncoupled the merciless pack of the law at my heels."

On the same subject Burns thus writes to John Richmond, then in Edinburgh, on the 30th of July, 1786:—"My hour is now come: you and I will never meet in Britain more: I have orders within three weeks at farthest to repair on board the Nancy, Captain Smith, from Clyde to Jamaica, and to call at Antigua. This, except to our friend James Smith, whom God long preserve, is a secret about Mauchline. Would you believe it: a warrant has been got to throw me into jail till I find security in an enormous sum! This they keep an entire secret, but I got it by a channel they little dream of, and I am wandering from one friend's house to another, and, like a true son of the gospel, 'have no where to lay my head.' I know you will pour an execration upon her head; but spare the poor ill-advised girl for my sake." It is next to needless to add, that all this alludes to the situation in which the Poet was then placed with Jean Armour; the friend, for the sad issue of whose "Amour" he

lamented, was himself: and the pangs which he describes with such feeling were suffered by his own heart. He seems to have blamed Mrs. Armour most: and, certainly, in a letter now before me, has "spared no arrows."

DESPONDENCY,

AN ODE.

I.

Oppress'd with grief, oppress'd with care,
A burden more than I can bear,
I set me down and sigh:
O life! thou art a galling load,
Along a rough, a weary road,
To wretches such as I!
Dim-backward as I cast my view,
What sick'ning scenes appear!
What sorrows yet may pierce me thro',
Too justly I may fear!
Still caring, despairing,
Must be my bitter doom;
My woes here shall close ne'er
But with the closing tomb!

II.

Happy, ye sons of busy life,
Who, equal to the bustling strife,
No other view regard!
Ev'n when the wished end's deny'd,
Yet while the busy means are ply'd,
They bring their own reward:
Whilst I, a hope-abandon'd wight,
Unfitted with an aim,
Meet ev'ry sad returning night
An' joyless morn the same;

You, bustling, and justling,
Forget each grief and pain;
I, listless, yet restless,
Find evry prospect vain.

III.

How blest the solitary's lot,
Who, all-forgetting, all-forgot,
Within his humble cell,
The cavern wild with tangling roots,
Sits o'er his newly gather'd fruits,
Beside his crystal well!
Or, haply, to his ev'ning thought,
By unfrequented stream,
The ways of men are distant brought,
A faint collected dream;
While praising, and raising
His thoughts to heav'n on high,
As wand'ring, meand'ring,
He views the solemn sky.

IV.

Than I, no lonely hermit plac'd
Where never human footstep trac'd,
Less fit to play the part;
The lucky moment to improve,
And just to stop, and just to move,
With self-respecting art:
But, ah! those pleasures, loves, and joys,
Which I too keenly taste,
The solitary can despise,
Can want, and yet be blest!
He needs not, he heeds not,
Or human love or hate,
Whilst I here, must cry here
At perfidy ingrate!

V.

Oh! enviable, early days,
When dancing thoughtless pleasure's maze,
To care, to guilt unknown!
How ill exchang'd for riper times,
To feel the follies, or the crimes,
Of others, or my own!
Ye tiny elves that guiltless sport,
Like linnets in the bush,
Ye little know the ills ye court,
When manhood is your wish!
The losses, the crosses,
That active man engage!
The fears all, the tears all,
Of dim declining age!

It would form perhaps one of the most amusing, if not the most instructive chapter in poetic history, to compare the various opinions expressed by the inspired respecting happiness. He who dwells in a lonely valley believes happiness resides in the crowded city, among company and books; while he who sings amid the rattle of other men's chariot-wheels, and the smoke of ten thousand chimnies, fixes the abode of happiness by the side of some purling brook,—beside a green hill, where the wind is ever fragrant, and the voice of nature alone is heard. The high born bard, sick of the hollow courtesies of polished society, sighs for pastoral solitudes, where flowers never fade, and flocks never stray, and beauty is never out of blossom: the shepherd bard, on the other hand, who has to wander over moors and mountains, half-choaked in winter with drifting snow, and half-scorched in summer with burning suns,—who has to smear and clip his flocks, as well as keep them from the fox, and save them, too, from smothering in a snow-wreath, envies the opulent, and longs to be a lord. There was some sense in the remark of the Scotchman, who, in reading the saying of Solomon,—"Snow is beautiful in its season," exclaimed, "Aye, nae doubt it was beautiful to you sitting with rich wines and the lasses o' Jerusalem aside you: but had ye been a poor stane-mason ye would hae said no such thing."

It is plain that Burns did not find happiness on the furrowed

field; or in galloping three hundred miles a week over ten parishes as a gauger: he looks back on the enviable days of his boyhood, and thinks them ill-exchanged for the riper times and full-blown follies of manhood. In this he agrees with Gray, who exclaims, in his "Distant prospect of Eton College;"

"Ah happy hills! ah pleasing shade!
Ah fields beloved in vain,
Where once my careless childhood strayed
A stranger yet to pain.
I feel the gales that from ye blow
A momentary bliss bestow,
As waving fresh their gladsome wing,
My weary soul they seem to sooth,
And redolent of joy and youth,
To breathe a second spring."

"I think," observes Burns, "it is one of the greatest pleasures attending a poetic genius, that we can give our woes, cares, joys, and loves an embodied form in verse; which to me is ever immediate ease." Fuseli, the painter, seeing his wife in a passion one day, said, "Swear, my love, swear heartily; you know not how much it will ease you."

THE

COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

INSCRIBED TO ROBERT AIKEN, ESQ.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure;
Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,
The short but simple annals of the poor."

GRAY.

I.

My lov'd, my honor'd, much respected friend!
No mercenary bard his homage pays;
With honest pride, I scorn each selfish end:
My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and praise:
To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,
The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene;
The native feelings strong, the guileless ways;
What Aiken in a cottage would have been;
Ah! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there, I ween!

II.

November chill blaws loud wi' angry sough;
The short'ning winter-day is near a close;
The miry beasts retreating frae the pleugh:
The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose:
The toil-worn cotter frae his labor goes,
This night his weekly moil is at an end,
Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,
And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hameward bend.

III.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,
Beneath the shelter of an aged tree;
Th' expectant wee-things, toddlin', stacher thro'
To meet their dad, wi' flichterin noise an' glee.
His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily,
His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's smile,
The lisping infant prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile,
An' makes him quite forget his labor an' his toil.

IV.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in,
At service out, amang the farmers roun':
Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin
A cannie errand to a neebor town:
Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,
In youthfu' bloom, love sparkling in her e'e,
Comes hame, perhaps, to show a braw new gown,
Or deposite her sair-worn penny-fee,
To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

V.

With joy unfeign'd, brothers and sisters meet,
An' each for other's weelfare kindly spiers:
The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet;
Each tells the unco's that he sees or hears;

The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years;
Anticipation forward points the view.
The mother, wi' her needle an' her sheers,
Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new;—
The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

VI.

Their master's an' their mistress's command,
The younkers a' are warned to obey;
And mind their labors wi' an eydent hand,
An ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play:
"And O! be sure to fear the Lord alway!
And mind your duty, duly, morn, and night!
Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,
Implore His counsel and assisting might:
They never sought in vain, that sought the Lord aright!"

VII.

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door;
Jenny, wha kens the meaning o' the same,
Tells how a neebor lad cam o'er the moor,
To do some errands, and convoy her hame.
The wily mother sees the conscious flame
Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek,
With heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,
While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;
Weel pleas'd the mother hears, it's nae wild, worthless rake.

VIII.

Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;
A strappan youth; he taks the mother's eye;
Blythe Jenny sees the visit's no ill-ta'en;
The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.
The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,
But blate an' laithfu', scarce can weel behave;
The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy
What makes the youth sae bashfu' and sae grave;
Well pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like the lave.

IX.

O happy love! where love like this is found!
O heart-felt raptures!—bliss beyond compare!
I've placed much this weary, mortal round,
And sage experience bids me this declare—
"If heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure spare,
One cordial in this melancholy vale,
'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair
In other's arms, breathe out the tender tale,
Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the ev'ning gale."

X.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart—
A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!
That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art,
Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?
Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!
Are honor, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?
Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,
Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?
Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

XI.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,
The healesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food:
The soupe their only hawkie does afford,
That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:
The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,
To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,
An' aft he's prest, an' aft he ca's it guid;
The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,
How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the bell.

XII.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
The sire turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,
The big ha' Bible, ance his father's pride;

His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,
His lyart haffets wearing thin an' bare;
Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
He wales a portion with judicious care;
And "Let us worship GOD!" he says, with solemn air.

XIII.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;
They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:
Perhaps Dundee's wild-warbling measures rise,
Or plaintive martyrs, worthy of the name;
Or noble Elgin beets the heaven-ward flame,
The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:
Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;
The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise;
Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

XIV.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,
How Abram was the friend of GOD on high;
Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage
With Amalek's ungracious progeny;
Or how the royal Bard did groaning lie
Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;
Or Job's pathetic plaint, and wailing cry;
Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire:
Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

XV.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;
How HE, who bore in heaven the second name,
Had not on earth whereon to lay his head:
How his first followers and servants sped,
The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:
How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;
And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by Heaven's command.

XVI.

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,
The saint, the father, and the husband prays:
Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing,"
That thus they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear;
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

XVII.

Compar'd with this, how poor Religion's pride,
In all the pomp of method, and of art,
When men display to congregations wide,
Devotion's ev'ry grace, except the heart!
The pow'r, incens'd, the pageant will desert,
The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;
But, haply, in some cottage far apart,
May hear, well pleas'd, the language of the soul;
And in his book of life the inmates poor enrol.

XVIII.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest:
The parent-pair their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to heaven the warm request,
That HE, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them and for their little ones provide;
But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine preside.

XIX.

From scenes like these, old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad.
Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,
"An honest man's the noblest work of God;"

And certes, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,
The cottage leaves the palace far behind;
What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,
Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,
Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

XX.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!
For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil,
Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet content!
And, O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent
From luxury's contagion, weak and vile!
Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,
A virtuous populace may rise the while,
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd isle.

XXI.

O Thou! who pour'd the patriotic tide
That stream'd through Wallace's undaunted heart:
Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,
Or nobly die, the second glorious part,
(The patriot's God, peculiarly thou art,
His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!)
O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;
But still the patriot, and the patriot bard,
In bright succession raise, her ornament and guard!

When Burns was first invited to dine at Dunlop-house, a westlan dame, who acted as housekeeper, appeared to doubt the propriety of her mistress entertaining a mere ploughman who made rhymes, as if he were a gentleman of old descent. By way of convincing Mrs. M'Guistan, for that was her name, of the bard's right to such distinction, Mrs. Dunlop gave her "The Cotter's Saturday Night" to read. This was soon done: she returned the volume with a strong shaking of the head, say-

ing, "Nae doubt gentlemen and ladies think mickle o' this, bu for me its naething but what I saw i' my father's house every day, and I dinna see how he could hae tauld it ony other way.' The M'Guistans are a numerous clan; few of the peasantry personally acquainted with Burns were willing to allow that his merit exceeded their own.—"Indeed, sir," said one of those worthies, Hugh Cowan by name, to an inquiring admirer, "Robert Burns, save in clinking words, was just an ordinary man. I taught him the use o' the cudgel, and should ken what he had in him, I think."

Of the origin of this poem, Gilbert Burns gives a clear account.—"Robert had frequently remarked to me that he thought there was something peculiarly venerable in the phrase, 'Let us worship God!' used by a decent, sober head of a family, introducing family worship. To this sentiment of the Author, the world is indebted for 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' When Robert had not some pleasure in view in which I was not thought fit to participate, we used frequently to walk together, when the weather was favorable, on the Sunday afternoon—those precious breathing times to the laboring part of the community—and enjoyed such Sundays as would make one regret to see their number abridged. It was in one of these walks that I first had the pleasure of hearing the Author repeat 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' I do not recollect to have read or heard any thing by which I was more highly electrified. The fifth and sixth stanzas, and the eighteenth, thrilled with peculiar ecstacy through my soul." The household of the virtuous William Burness was the scene of the Poem, and William himself was the saint, and father, and husband of this truly sacred drama. Of this there can be no doubt; though I have heard it averred by gentlemen from the neighbourhood of Mauchline that George Wilson, cotter on the farm of Lochlea, a pious and worthy man, sat for the portrait. It is a better authenticated fact that Burns had Fergusson's "Farmer's Ingle" in his mind when he composed it. Both poems give an image of the household of a husbandman: the elder-born bard says:—

"Weel kens the gudewife that the pleughs require
A heartsome meltith, and refreshin' synd
O' nappy liquor, owre a bleezin fire;
Sair wark and poortith downa weel be joined,
Wi' buttered bannocks now the girdle reeks;
I' the far nook the bowie briskly reams;
The rearied kail stands by the chimley cheeks,
And hand the riggin het wi' welcome streams
Whilk than the daintiest kitchen nicer seems."

He continues the rustic picture, and exhibits the inmates in conversation—

"The couthy cracks begin when supper's owre;
The cheering bicker gaurs them glibly gash
O' simmer's showery blinks and winter sour,
Whase floods did erst their mailens produce hash.
'Bout kirk and market eke their tales go on,
How Jock woo'd Jenny here to be his bride;
And there, how Marion, for a bastard son,
Upo' the cutty stool was forced to ride,
The waefu' scauld o' our mess John to bide."

The housewife lectures her maidens on thrift, and the farmer is not unemployed :—

"Frae him the lads their morning counsel tak;
What stacks he wants to thrash; what rigs to till;
How big a birn may lie on Bassie's back,
For meal and multure to the thirlen mill,
Neist the gudewife her hireling damsels bids
Glow'r through the byre and see the hawkies bound,
Tak tent 'case crummy tak her wonted tids,
And ca' the leglins treasure on the ground,
Whilk spills a kebbuck nice or yellow pound."

It is to be lamented that the pictures of Fergusson and Burns are not to be explained by reference to the general practice of these our later days: the farmer no longer presides among his menials like a father with his children, and the sound of psalm and prayer is now seldom heard among the farm onsteads and cottages. Washington Irving, perceived a similar falling off in the south—he is speaking of family prayers.—"It was once almost universally the case at the seats of the nobility and gentry of England, and it is much to be regretted that the custom is fallen into neglect; for the dullest observer must be sensible of the order and serenity prevalent in those households where the occasional exercise of a beautiful form of worship in the morning gives, as it were, the key-note to every temper for the day, and attunes every spirit to harmony."

THE FIRST PSALM.

The man, in life wherever plac'd,
Hath happiness in store,
Who walks not in the wicked's way,
Nor learns their guilty lore!

Nor from the seat of scornful pride
Casts forth his eyes abroad,
But with humility and awe
Still walks before his GOD.

That man shall flourish like the trees
Which by the streamlets grow;
The fruitful top is spread on high
And firm the root below.

But he whose blossoms buds in guilt
Shall to the ground be cast,
And, like the rootless stubble, tost
Before the sweeping blast.

For why? that GOD the good adore
Hath giv'n them peace and rest,
But hath decreed that wicked men
Shall ne'er be truly blest.

I am not one of those who think Burns so happy in his sacred as in his ordinary poetry. Any one who compares his "First Psalm" with the common version of Scotland will feel that in simplicity the sacred minstrel of the days of the Stuarts surpasses the Poet of Kyle. The latter is cold and tame in comparison. The verse describing the good man and the wicked man dwells on many northern memories:—

"He shall be like a tree that grows
Near planted by a river,
Which in his season yields his fruit,
And his leaf fadeth never:
And all he doth shall prosper well;
The wicked are not so,
But like they are unto the chaff
Which wind drives to an fro."

A new version of the Psalms has long been talked of in Scotland; but the General Assembly must proceed warily in the matter. Some of the Psalms are exquisite compositions. I shall instance but the eighth psalm, with a slight blemish in one or two lines, it is perfect:—it is Thomson's Seasons in little. The want of elegance which I have heard complained

of is but a poor reason for throwing into oblivion a vast body of verse which abounds with such simplicity of language, such sincerity of expression, and wears such an old-world air, as no living bards with all their harmony and polish can equal. Besides, they carry upon them the stamp of pure days and holy hands, and have the advantage of being venerable.

THE FIRST SIX VERSES

OF THE

NINETIETH PSALM.

O Thou, the first, the greatest friend
Of all the human race!
Whose strong right hand has ever been
Their stay and dwelling place!

Before the mountains heav'd their heads
Beneath Thy forming hand,
Before this ponderous globe itself
Arose at Thy command;

That Pow'r which rais'd and still upholds
This universal frame,
From countless, unbeginning time
Was ever still the same.

Those mighty periods of years
Which seem to us so vast,
Appear no more before Thy sight
Than yesterday that's past.

Thou giv'st the word: Thy creature, man,
Is to existence brought;
Again Thou say'st, "Ye sons of men,
Return ye into nought!"

Thou layest them with all their cares,
In everlasting sleep:
As with a flood Thou tak'st them off
With overwhelming sweep.

They flourish like the morning flow'r,
In beauty's pride array'd;
But long ere night, cut down, it lies
All wither'd and decay'd.

The ninetieth psalm—the Scottish version—is said to have been a favorite in the household of William Burness. Though not so happily versified as others of the sacred lyrics, it contains beautiful verses, and touches, with no little feeling, on the life and age of man:—

"Our sins thou and iniquities
Dost in thy presence place,
And set'st our secret faults before
The brightness of thy face;
For in thine anger all our days
Do pass on to an end,
And, as a tale that hath been told,
So we our years do spend.

"Three score and ten years do sum up
Our days and years, we see:
Or if, by reason of more strength,
In some fourscore they be,
Yet doth the strength of such old men
But grief and labor prove;
For it is soon cut off, and we
Fly hence and soon remove."

To devotional verse the mind of Burns was directed early: the reading of the Bible at school was sufficient for this; but there were other impulses:—"The earliest composition that I recollect taking pleasure in," he writes to Dr. Moore, "was the Vision of Mirza, and a hymn of Addison's beginning

'How are thy servants blest O Lord!'

I particularly remember one half-stanza, which was music to my boyish ear:—

'For though on dreadful whirls we hung,
High on the broken wave.'

I met with these lines in Mason's English Collection, one of my school-books."

It is related in our Scottish legends that a wayfaring Irishman took shelter, one stormy night, in a farmer's house, just as the household struck up the ninetieth psalm, some say the hundred and nineteenth—in family worship. The stranger, ignorant of

the devotional turn of his host, imagined the psalm to be a song in honor of his coming—in short, a welcome. He sat and heard it to an end, and then said, "Merry be your heart, goodman: that's a long song, and a good song; and, by way of requital, I shall give you a touch of Brian O'Linn."

TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY,

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN APRIL,

1786.

Wee, modest, crimson-tipped flow'r,
Thou's met me in an evil hour;
For I maun crush amang the stoure
Thy slender stem:
To spare thee now is past my pow'r,
Thou bonnie gem.

Alas! it's no thy neebor sweet,
The bonnie lark, companion meet,
Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet!
Wi' speckl'd breast,
When upward-springing, blythe, to greet,
The purpling east.

Cauld blew the bitter-biting north
Upon thy early, humble birth;
Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth
Amid the storm,
Scarce rear'd above the parent earth
Thy tender form.

The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,
High shelt'ring woods and wa's maun shield;
But thou, beneath the random bield
O' clod or stane,
Adorns the histie stibble-field,
Unseen, alane.

There, in thy scanty mantle clad,
Thy snawie bosom sun-ward spread,
Thou lifts thy unassuming head
In humble guise;
But now the share uptears thy bed,
And low thou lies!

Such is the fate of artless maid,
Sweet flow'ret of the rural shade!
By love's simplicity betray'd,
And guileless trust,
'Till she, like thee, all soil'd, is laid
Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,
On life's rough ocean luckless starr'd!
Unskilful he to note the card
Of prudent lore,
'Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,
And whelm him o'er!

Such fate to suffering worth is giv'n,
Who long with wants and woes has striv'n,
By human pride or cunning driv'n
To mis'ry's brink,
Till wrench'd of ev'ry stay but heav'n,
He, ruin'd, sink!

Ev'n thou who mourn'st the Daisy's fate,
That fate is thine—no distant date:
Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,
Full on thy bloom,
Till crush'd beneath the furrow's weight,
Shall be thy doom.

The "Mountain Daisy" was composed, as the Poet has related, at the plough: the field where he crushed the "Wee modest crimson-tipped flower" lies next to that in which he turned up the nest of the Mouse, and both are on the farm of Mossgiel,

and still shown to anxious inquirers by the neighbouring peasantry.—"Mossgiel," says the accurate Chambers," is about a Mile from Mauchline. It is a very plain farm-steading of the kind described in Ramsay's 'Gentle Shepherd' :—

> 'A snug thack house, before the door a green;
> Hens on the midden, ducks in dubs are seen;
> On this side stands a barn, on that a byre,
> A peat-stack joins, and forms a rural square;'

except that the buildings are not thatched. Being situated at the height of the country, between the vales of the Ayr and the Irvine, it has a peculiarly bleak and exposed appearance which is but imperfectly obviated by a very tall hedge and some well-grown trees which gather around it, and beneath one of which, it is said, the Poet loved to recline. The domestic accommodations consist of little more than a but and a ben—that is, a kitchen and a small room. The latter though in every respect most humble, and partly occupied by fixed beds, does not appear uncomfortable. Every consideration, however, in the mind of the visitor sinks beneath the one intense feeling that here—within these four walls—warmed at this little fire-place, and lighted by this little window—lived one of the most extraordinary men that ever breathed; and here wrote some of the most celebrated poems of modern times. The house is in every respect exactly in the same condition as when the Poet lived in it." Who could wish to add any thing to a description so touching and so true as this!

The second verse of the Daisy reminds me of a stanza of an old north country song, a favorite once with the peasantry, who loved it for its truth as well as beauty :—

> "The lark in the morning
> Arises from her nest,
> And mounts to the air
> With the dew on her breast;
> And like my jovial ploughman
> Sae merrily she'll sing,
> And at gloaming return
> To her nest back again."

EPISTLE

TO

A YOUNG FRIEND.

May, 1786.

I.

I LANG hae thought, my youthfu' friend,
A something to have sent you,
Though it should serve nae other end
Than just a kind memento;
But how the subject-theme may gang,
Let time and chance determine;
Perhaps it may turn out a sang,
Perhaps, turn out a sermon.

II.

Ye'll try the world fu' soon, my lad,
And, Andrew dear, believe me,
Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,
And muckle they may grieve ye:
For care and trouble set your thought,
Ev'n when your end's attained;
And a' your views may come to nought,
Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

III.

I'll no say men are villains a';
The real, harden'd wicked,
Wha hae nae check but human law,
Are to a few restricked;
But, och! mankind are unco weak,
An' little to be trusted;
If self the wavering balance shake,
It's rarely right adjusted!

IV.

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,
Their fate we should na censure,
For still th' important end of life,
They equally may answer;
A man may hae an honest heart,
Tho' poortith hourly stare him;
A man may tak a neebor's part,
Yet hae nae cash to spare him.

V

Ay free, aff han' your story tell,
When wi' a bosom crony;
But still keep something to yoursel
Ye scarcely tell to ony.
Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can
Frae critical dissection;
But keek thro' ev'ry other man,
Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.

VI.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,
Luxuriantly indulge it;
But never tempt th' illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it:
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But, och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

VII.

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by ev'ry wile
That's justified by honor;
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train-attendant;
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.

VIII.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
To haud the wretch in order;
But where ye feel your honor grip,
Let that ay be your border:
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side pretences;
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.

IX.

The great Creator to revere
Must sure become the creature;
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And ev'n the rigid feature:
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance entended;
An Atheist laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

X.

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded;
Or if she gie a random sting,
It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest-driv'n,
A conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n
Is sure a noble anchor!

XI.

Adieu, dear, amiable youth!
Your heart can ne'er be wanting!
May prudence, fortitude, and truth
Erect your brow undaunting!
In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed,"
Still daily to grow wiser:
And may you better reck the rede
Than ever did th' adviser!

When Burns saw that "misfortune's cauld nor' west" was ready to burst upon him, and that laboring on his farm was not likely to avert it, he wooed the muse with redoubled ardor—perhaps from a feeling that the exertions of his genius, and not of his hands, would save him. During the latter half of the year 1785 and the spring and summer part of 1786, he produced a vast body of poems—one of them is—"The Epistle to Andrew Aiken," son to Robert Aiken, writer, in Ayr, to whom "The Cotter's Saturday Night" is inscribed. A coldness seems to have arisen between Burns and Robert Aiken: the former imagined that his friend, in his capacity of lawyer, had made himself more busy than necessary in the affair of the marriage contract between him and Jean Armour. Be that as it may, the name of Aiken all at once disappears from the Poet's correspondence.

The Epistle seems to have been addressed to one every way worthy of such a strain: young Aiken entered into the service of his country, and rose to distinction and affluence. He obtained some notice, too, the other year, at the dinner celebrating the birth-day of the Ayrshire Ploughman, and that of the Ettrick Shepherd; nature having, it seems, out of a wondrous love for the 25th of January, produced both Poets on that day of the year—and produced them both in storms: the hail and the whirlwind were abroad when Burns was born; and Ettrick rose in flood as Ettrick never rose before, when Hogg appeared.

TO A LOUSE,

ON SEEING ONE ON A LADY' S BONNET, AT CHURCH.

Ha! whare ye gaun, ye crowlin ferlie!
Your imprudence protects you sairly:
I canna say but ye strunt rarely
Owre gauze and lace;
Tho' faith, I fear, ye dine but sparely
On sic a place.

Ye ugly, creepin', blastit wonner,
Detested, shunn'd, by saunt an' sinner,
How dare you set your fit upon her,
Sae fine a lady!
Gae somewhere else, and seek your dinner
On some poor body.

Swith, in some beggar's haffet squattle;
There ye may creep, and sprawl, and sprattle
Wi' ither kindred, jumping cattle,
In shoals and nations;
Whare horn nor bane ne'er daur unsettle
Your thick plantations.

Now haud you there, ye're out o' sight,
Below the fatt'rells, snug an' tight;
Na, faith ye yet! ye'll no be right
'Till ye've got on it,
The vera tapmost, tow'ring height
O' Miss's bonnet.

My sooth! right bauld ye set your nose out,
As plump and gray as ony grozet;
O for some rank, mercurial rozét,
Or fell, red smeddum,
I'd gie you sic a hearty doze o't,
Wad dress your droddum!

I wad na been surpris'd to spy
You on an auld wife's flainen toy;
Or aiblins some bit duddie boy,
On's wyliecoat;
But Miss's fine Lunardi! fie!
How daur ye do't?

O, Jenny, dinna toss your head,
An' set your beauties a' abread!
Ye little ken what cursed speed
The blastie's makin'!
Thae winks and finger-ends, I dread,
Are notice takin'!

O wad some power the gifted gie us
To see oursel's as others see us!
It wad frae monie a blunder free us
An' foolish notion:
What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,
And ev'n devotion!

Homelier subjects were sometimes chosen by the Muse of Burns than his more stately friends desired. "The Louse" is one of them. Some of his lady patronesses expostulated, and some of his critics frowned; it was all to no purpose:—"Forbidden he wadna be:" and it is as well, perhaps, as it is. When once a man of genius begins to sacrifice his own judgment to the taste of others, who knows where he may halt. As soon as he ceases to "wear his ain belt his ain gait" he puts it on according to the example of the world, and is no longer an original. Almost all the themes on which Burns sung are of a humble kind: a Mouse, a Daisy, an Old Mare, a Haggis, and so on, all pertain to the clouted shoe. The moral which he draws is one the world is not out of need of: to see ourselves as others see us, would give our vanity a plucking;

> "What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us
> And ev'n devotion!"

That vanity creeps into devotion is not unknown to the world. A worthy in my native vale, who imagined himself not only powerful in prayer, but that he had a sort of divinity of look conferred upon him when he knelt, turned round to his wife in the midst of his fervor, and said, "Tibbie! how do I look when I pray!" Another of our Nithsdale Holy Willies, who commonly volunteered a prayer when a corpse was lifted at a burial, arrived too late on one occasion, and found his place supplied by a meek, mild man, whose calmness was mistaken for coldness. "Sit you down, sir," said the other, pushing him aside, "your word has no weight at all;" and holding up his hands, poured out a thundering prayer, which might have been heard a mile down the wind.

"We ought," Burns observes, "when we wish to be economists in happiness, to fix the standard of our own character, and when on full examination we know where we stand, and how much ground we occupy, let us contend for it as property; and those who seem to doubt or deny us what is justly ours, let us either pity their prejudices, or despise their judgment. This is not self-conceit, it is self-knowledge: the one is the overweening opinion of a fool, who fancies himself to be what he wishes himself to be thought; the other is the honest justice that a man of sense, who has strongly examined the subject, owes to himself. Without this standard,—this column in our own mind, we are perpetually at the mercy of the petulance, the mistakes, the prejudices, nay the very weakness and wickedness, of our fellow-creatures." The Poet's judgment was equal to his genius: he estimated himself right; and in almost all things saw himself as others saw him.

EPISTLE TO J. RANKINE,

ENCLOSING SOME POEMS.

O ROUGH, rude, ready-witted Rankine,
The wale o' cocks for fun an' drinkin'!
There's monie godly folks are thinkin',
Your dreams* an' tricks
Will send you, Korah-like, a-sinkin',
Straught to auld Nick's.

Ye hae sae monie cracks an' cants,
And in your wicked, dru'ken rants,
Ye mak a devil o' the saunts,
An' fill them fou;
And then their failings, flaws, an' wants,
Are a' seen through.

Hypocrisy, in mercy spare it!
That holy robe, O dinna tear it!
Spare't for their sakes wha aften wear it,
The lads in black!
But your curst wit, when it comes near it,
Rives 't aff their back.

Think, wicked sinner, wha ye're skaithing,
It's just the blue-gown badge an' claithing
O' saunts; tak that, ye lea'e them naething
To ken them by,
Frae ony unregenerate heathen
Like you or I.

I've sent you here some rhyming ware,
A' that I bargain'd for, an' mair;
Sae, when you hae an hour to spare,
I will expect
Yon sang,† ye'll sen 't wi' cannie care,
And no neglect.

* A certain humorous dream of his was then making a noise in the country-side.

† A song he had promised the author.

Tho' faith, sma' heart hae I to sing!
My muse dow scarcely spread her wing!
I've play'd mysel a bonnie spring,
An' danc'd my fill!
I'd better gaen an' sair't the king,
At Bunker's Hill.

'Twas ae night, lately, in my fun,
I gaed a roving wi' the gun,
An' brought a paitrick to the grun',
A bonnie hen,
And, as the twilight was begun,
Thought nane wad ken.

The poor wee thing was little hurt;
I straikit it a wee for sport,
Ne'er thinkin' they wad fash me for't;
But, diel-ma-care!
Somebody tells the poacher-court
The hale affair.

Some auld, us'd hands had taen a note,
That sic a hen had got a shot;
I was suspected for the plot;
I scorn'd to lie;
So gat the whissle o' my groat,
A' pay 't the fee.

But, by my gun, o' guns the wale,
An' by my pouther an' my hail,
An' by my hen, an' by her tail,
I vow an' swear!
The game shall pay o'er moor an' dale,
For this neist year.

As soon 's the clockin-time is by,
An' the wee pouts begun to cry,
L—d, I'se hae sportin' by and by,
For my gowd guinea:
Tho' I should herd the buckskin kye
For 't, in Virginia,

Trouth, they had muckle for to blame!
'Twas neither broken wing nor limb,
But twa-three draps about the wame
Scarce thro' the feathers;
An' baith a yellow George to claim,
An' thole their blethers!

It pits me ay as mad's a hare;
So I can rhyme nor write nae mair;
But pennyworths again is fair,
When time's expedient:
Meanwhile I am, respected Sir,
Your most obedient.

John Rankine, to whom this Epistle is addressed, lived at Adam-Hill, in Ayrshire, and merited the praise of "rough and ready-witted," which Burns bestowed. The "dream which was making a noise in the country side," may be related as an instance of his caustic humor, Lord K—— it is said, was in the practice of calling all his familiar acquaintances "brutes," and sometimes "damned brutes."—"Well, ye brute, how are ye to-day, brute?" was his usual mode of salutation. Once, in company, his lordship having indulged in this rudeness more than his wont, turned to Rankine and exclaimed, "Brute, are ye dumb? have ye no queer, sly story to tell us?"—"I have nae story," said Rankine, "but last night I had an odd dream."—"Out with it, by all means," said the other.—"Aweel, ye see," said Rankine, "I dreamed I was dead, and that for keeping other than good company on earth I was damned. When I knocked at hell-door, wha should open it but the deil; he was in a rough humor, and said 'Wha may ye be, and what's your name?'—'My name,' quoth I, 'is John Rankine, and my dwelling-place was Adam-Hill.'—'Gae wa' wi',' quoth Satan, 'ye canna be here; ye're ane of Lord K——'s damned brutes—hell's fou o' them already!'" This sharp rebuke, it is said, polished for the future his lordship's speech.

The figurative conclusion of the Epistle will admit of some verses from the Poet's "Address to an Illegitimate Child," by way of illustration.

"Thou's welcome, wean; mishanter fa' me,
If aught of thee or of thy mammy

Shall ever daunton me or awe me,
My sweet wee lady;
Or if I blush when thou shalt ca' me
Tit-ta or daddy.

"An' if thou be what I wad ha'e thee,
An' tak the counsel I sall gi'e thee,
A lovin' father I'll be to thee,
If thou be spar'd;
Thro' a' thy childish years I'll e'e thee,
An' think't weel war'd.

"Gude grant that thou may ay inherit
Thy mither's person, grace, and merit,
An' thy poor worthless daddy's spirit,
Without his failin's;
'Twill please me mair to hear an' see it,
Than stocket mailens."

The "sweet wee lady" of these verses was "The sonsie, smirking, dear-bought Bess" of another of the Poet's epistles. Bess grew up and became "a wife and eke a mother." Her death is thus announced in the Scots Magazine:—"December 8th, 1817. Died, Elizabeth Burns, wife of Mr. John Bishop, overseer at Polkemmet, daughter of the celebrated Robert Burns, and the subject of some of his most beautiful lines." She is said to have resembled the Poet more than any other of his children.

ON A SCOTCH BARD,

GONE TO THE WEST INDIES.

A' ye wha live by soups o' drink,
A' ye wha live by crambo-clink,
A' ye wha live and never think,
Come, mourn wi' me!
Our billie's gien us a' a jink,
An' owre the sea.

Lament him a' ye rantin' core,
Wha dearly like a random-splore,
Nae mair he'll join the merry roar
In social key;
For now he's taen anither shore,
An' owre the sea!

The bonnie lasses weel may wiss him,
An' in their dear petitions place him,
The widows, wives, an' a' may bless him,
Wi' tearfu' e'e;
For weel I wat they'll sairly miss him
That's owre the sea!

O Fortune, they hae room to grummle!
Hadst thou ta'en aff some drowsy bumble
Wha can do nought but fyke and fumble,
'Twad been nae plea;
But he was gleg as onie wumble,
That's owre the sea!

Auld, cantie Kyle may weepers wear,
An' stain them wi' the saut, saut tear;
'Twill mak her poor auld heart, I fear,
In flinders flee;
He was her laureat monie a year,
That's owre the sea!

He saw misfortune's cauld nor-west
Lang mustering up a bitter blast;
A jillet brak his heart at last,
Ill may she be!
So, took a birth afore the mast,
An' owre the sea.

To tremble under fortune's cummock,
On scarce a bellyfu' o' drummock
Wi' his proud, independent stomach,
Could ill agree;
So row't his hurdies in a hammock,
An' owre the sea.

He ne'er was gien to great misguiding,
Yet coin his pouches wad na bide in;
Wi' him it ne'er was under hiding:
He dealt it free:
The muse was a' that he took pride in,
That's owre the sea.

Jamaica bodies, use him weel,
An' hap him in a cozie biel:
Ye'll find him ay a dainty chiel,
And fou o' glee;
He wad na wrang'd the vera deil,
That's owre the sea.

Fareweel, my rhyme-composing billie!
Your native soil was right ill-willie;
But may ye flourish like a lily,
Now bonnilie!
I'll toast ye in my hindmost gillie,
Tho' owre the sea!

In a copy of the Kilmarnock edition now before me, some one has so far mistaken the matter as to write that Burns composed this poem on the departure of John Gerron—a sorry rhymer—for the West Indies. Every word of it is about himself—his story is even dwelt on with a painful minuteness. It is true that poor Gerron went abroad, wrote a poem on his own experiences, and went so far as to publish a volume of verse, which contained here and there a stroke of country wit, and exhibited a true domestic picture at the rate of two to a hundred pages. But he was a man ten years younger, perhaps, than Burns; and indeed it was the great success of the Ayrshire Ploughman which induced the Galwegian Blacksmith to "lean o'er his anvil" and think of rhyme. I have heard Wordsworth praise the ready flow of verse in this poem, and recite with much emotion the eighth and ninth stanzas.

Burns in this poem, as well as in others, speaks freely of himself. An old man of the west of Scotland, who still lives to remember him with affection, says—"He was subject to great fluctuation of spirits—sometimes he was so depressed that he would shun his most intimate friends; and when observing any one he knew approaching him on the road, he hesitated not to leap over a hedge, or strike into another path, to avoid being disturbed." He was at such periods as likely to be in a poetic reverie as in a melancholy one.

THE FAREWELL.

"The valiant, in himself, what can he suffer?
Or what does he regard his single woes!
But when, alas! he multiplies himself,
To dearer selves, to the lov'd tender fair,
To those whose bless, whose beings hang upon him,
To help'ess children! then, O then! he feels
The point of misery fest'ring in his heart,
And weakly weeps his fortune like a coward.
Such, such am I! undone!"

THOMSON'S EDWARD AND ELEANORA.

I.

FAREWELL, old Scotia's bleak domains,
Far dearer than the torrid plains
Where rich ananas blow!
Farewell, a mother's blessing dear!
A brother's sigh! a sister's tear!
My Jean's heart-rending throe!
Farewell, my Bess! tho' thou 'rt bereft
Of my parental care;
A faithful brother I have left,
My part in him thou 'lt share!
Adieu too, to you too,
My Smith, my bosom frien';
When kindly you mind me,
O then befriend my Jean!

II.

What bursting anguish tears my heart!
From thee, my Jeany, must I part!
Thou weeping answ'rest no!
Alas! misfortune stares my face,
And points to ruin and disgrace,
I for thy sake must go!

Thee, Hamilton, and Aiken dear,
A grateful, warm adieu!
I, with a much indebted tear,
Shall still remember you!
All-hail then, the gale then,
Wafts me from thee, dear shore!
It rustles, and whistles
I'll never see thee more!

These very touching stanzas were composed when the prospects of the poet darkened, and he looked towards the West-Indies as a place of refuge, and perhaps of hope. "My Smith my bosom frien'," is the same person to whom one of his best Epistles is addressed: and "Hamilton and Aiken dear" were at that period his chief advisers and patrons. The lines were first published in the Rev. Hamilton Paul's edition of the works of Burns—their authenticity is unquestionable.

A DEDICATION

TO

GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

Expect na, Sir, in this narration,
A fleechin, fleth'rin dedication,
To roose you up, an' ca' you guid,
An' sprung o' great an' noble bluid,
Because ye're surnam'd like his grace;
Perhaps related to the race;
Then when I'm tir'd—and sae are ye,
Wi' monie a fulsome, sinfu' lie,
Set up a face, how I stop short,
For fear your modesty be hurt.

This may do—maun do, sir, wi' them wha
Maun please the great folk for a wamefou;

For me! sae laigh I needna bow,
For, Lord be thankit, I can plough;
And when I downa yoke a naig,
Then, Lord be thankit, I can beg;
Sae I shall say, an' that's nae flatt'rin,"
Its just sic poet, an' sic patron.
The Poet, some guid angel help him,
Or else, I fear some ill ane skelp him,
He may do weel for a' he's done yet,
But only—he's no just begun yet.

The Patron, (sir, ye maun forgie me,
I winna lie, come what will o' me)
On ev'ry hand it will allow'd be,
He's just—nae better than he should be.

I readily and freely grant,
He downa see a poor man want;
What's no his ain, he winna tak it,
What ance he says he winna break it;
Aught he can lend he'll no refus't,
'Till aft his guidness is abus'd;
And rascals whyles that do him wrang,
Ev'n that, he does na mind it lang:
As master, landlord, husband, father,
He does na fail his part in either.

But then, nae thanks to him for a' that;
Nae godly symptom ye can ca' that;
It's naething but a milder feature,
Of our poor sinfu', corrupt nature:
Ye'll get the best o' moral works,
'Mang black Gentoos and Pagan Turks,
Or hunters wild on Ponotaxi,
Wha never heard of orthodoxy.
That he's the poor man's friend in need,
The gentleman in word and deed,
Its no thro' terror of d-mn-tion;
Its just a carnal inclination.

Morality, thou deadly bane,
Thy tens o' thousands thou hast slain!
Vain is his hope, whose stay and trust is
In moral mercy, truth, and justice!

No—stretch a point to catch a plack;
Abuse a brother to his back;
Steal thro' a winnock frae a wh-re,
But point the rake that taks the door;
Be to the poor like onie whunstane,
And haud their noses to the grunstane,
Ply ev'ry art o' legal thieving;
No matter, stick to sound believing.

Learn three-mile pray'rs, an' half-mile graces,
Wi' well-spread looves, an' lang wry faces;
Grunt up a solemn, lengthen'd groan,
And damn a' parties but your own;
I'll warrant then, ye're nae deceiver,
A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

O ye wha leave the springs o' Calvin,
For gumlie dubs of your ain delvin'!
Ye sons of heresy and error,
Ye'll some day squeel in quaking terror!
When Vengeance draws the sword in wrath,
And in the fire throws the sheath;
When Ruin, with his sweeping besom,
Just frets 'till heav'n commission gies him:
While o'er the harp pale Mis'ry moans,
And strikes the ever-deep'ning tones,
Still louder shrieks, and heavier groans!

Your pardon, Sir, for this digression,
I maist forgat my dedication;
But when divinity comes cross me,
My readers still are sure to lose me.

So, Sir, ye see 'twas nae daft vapor,
But I maturely thought it proper,

When a' my works I did review,
To dedicate them, Sir, to you:
Because (ye need na tak it ill)
I thought them something like yoursel.

Then patronize them wi' your favor,
And your petitioner shall ever——
I had amaist said, ever pray,
But that's a word I need na say:
For prayin' I hae little skill o't;
I'm baith dead sweer, an' wretched ill o't;
But I'se repeat each poor man's pray'r,
That kens or hears about you, Sir—

"May ne'er misfortune's gowling bark,
Howl thro' the dwelling o' the clerk!
May ne'er his gen'rous, honest heart,
For that same gen'rous spirit smart!
May Kennedy's far-honor'd name
Lang beet his hymeneal flame,
Till Hamiltons, at least a dizen,
Are frae their nuptial labors risen:
Five bonnie lasses round their table,
And seven braw fellows, stout an' able
To serve their king and country weel,
By word, or pen, or pointed steel!
May health and peace, with mutual rays,
Shine on the ev'ning o' his days;
'Till his wee curlie John's ier-oe,
When ebbing life nae mair shall flow,
The last, sad, mournful rites bestow."

I will not wind a lang conclusion,
With complimentary effusion:
But whilst your wishes and endeavours
Are blest with fortune's smiles and favors,
I am, dear Sir, with zeal most fervent
Your much indebted, humble servant.
But if (which pow'rs above prevent)
That iron-hearted carl, Want,

Attended in his grim advances,
By sad mistakes and black mischances,
While hopes, and joys, and pleasures fly him,
Make you as poor a dog as I am,
Your humble servant then no more;
For who would humbly serve the poor!
But by a poor man's hopes in Heav'n!
While recollection's pow'r is given,
If, in the vale of humble life,
The victim sad of fortune's strife,
I, thro' the tender gushing tear,
Should recognise my master dear,
If friendless, low, we meet together,
Then, Sir, your hand—my friend and brother.

One of the biographers of Burns charges him with asserting his independence of feeling in an arrogant manner in his "Dedication to Gavin Hamilton." On the same topic Jeffrey says, "The perpetual boast of his own independence is obtruded upon the readers of Burns in almost every page of his writings. The sentiment itself is noble, and is often finely expressed; but a gentleman would only have expressed it when he was insulted or provoked, and would never have made it a spontaneous theme to those friends in whose estimation he felt that his honor stood clear. It is mixed up, too, in Burns with a fierce tone of defiance, and indicates rather the pride of a sturdy peasant, than the calm and natural elevation of a generous mind." The humble position of the Poet in society implied dependance: when Burns left the stubble-field, washed his toil-hardened hands, and sat down at a rich man's table, he could not but feel that, as a ploughman, he was out of his place, and dreaded naturally enough that his entertainers might think themselves wondrous condescending.

Gavin Hamilton was descended from the Hamiltons of Kype in Lanarkshire, and not at all related, as has been said, to the curate of Kirk-Oswald, who had a hand in bringing in "the Highland host" upon the Westlan Whigs in 1677. The true cause of the paltry, spiteful persecution of Hamilton by "Daddy Auld" is related at large in the Session books: the Presbytery of Ayr ordered the record to be expunged as frivolous; but one of the house of Hamilton desired that it might remain as an instance of the arrogance of the Kirk Session.

One of the charges—the sternest one—has been put neatly into rhyme by Burns:

> "He sometimes gallops on a Sunday,
> And pricks the beast as if 'twere Monday."

"It is related," says Chambers, "of the laird of Kype, that he was once paying a visit to the Duke of Hamilton, when his grace inquired in what degree he was related to the ducal house, and whereabouts in the family tree the race of Kype was to be found. 'It would be needless to seek the root among the branches,' answered the haughty laird, who perhaps had some pretensions to be of the principal stock of the Hamiltons, or knew at least that the claims of the ducal house to the chieftainship were by no means clear."

ELEGY

ON

THE DEATH OF ROBERT RUISSEAUX.

Now Robin lies in his last lair,
He'll gabble rhyme, nor sing nae mair,
Cauld poverty, wi' hungry stare,
Nae mair shall fear him;
Nor anxious fear, nor cankert care,
E'er mair come near him.

To tell the truth, they seldom fash't him,
Except the moment that they crush't him;
For sune as chance or fate had hush't 'em
Tho' e'er sae short,
Then wi' a rhyme or song he lash't 'em
And thought it sport.

Tho' he was bred to kintra wark,
And counted was baith wight and stark,
Yet that was never Robin's mark
To mak a man;
But tell him, he was learned and clark,
Ye roos'd him than!

Cromek found this fragment among the papers of Burns, and printed it in the Reliques, with the intimation only that Ruisseaux was a play upon the Poet's own name. It is probably a portion of a poem in which he desired to dissect himself, and show his evil and his good to the world; but not having commenced so happily as he wished, threw it aside, and resumed the subject in that noble and touching strain, "The Bard's Epitaph."—"He meets us in his compositions," says Campbell, "undisguised as a peasant; at the same time his observations go extensively into life, like those of a man who felt the proper dignity of human nature in the character of a peasant." Perhaps of all poets Burns poured most of himself into poetry. Byron appears in his verse as in a mask, and never comes fairly and unhesitatingly forward; of Scott, as he says of his namesake.

> "Some saw an arm, and some a hand,
> And some the waving of a gown."

Of Campbell personally we know nothing from his verse; nor has Southey shown himself. Burns painted his own portrait, and did it so darkly, that others have presumptuously increased the gloom in their delineations of his character.

LETTER TO JAMES TAIT,

OF GLENCONNER.

Auld comrade dear, and brither sinner,
How's a' the folk about Glenconner?
How do you this blae eastlin wind,
That's like to blaw a body blind?
For me, my faculties are frozen,
My dearest member nearly dozen'd.
I've sent you here, by Johnie Simson,
Twa sage philosophers to glimpse on;
Smith, wi' his sympathetic feeling,
An' Reid, to common sense appealing.
Philosophers have fought and wrangled,
An' meikle Greek an' Latin mangled,
Till wi' their logic-jargon tir'd,
An' in the depth of science mir'd,

To common sense they now appeal,
What wives and wabsters see and feel.
But, hark ye, friend! I charge you strictly,
Peruse them, an' return them quickly,
For now I'm grown sae cursed douce
I pray and ponder butt the house,
My shins, my lane, I there sit roastin',
Perusing Bunyan, Brown, an' Boston;
Till by an' by, if I haud on,
I'll grunt a real gospel groan:
Already I begin to try it,
To cast my e'en up like a pyet,
When by the gun she tumbles o'er,
Flutt'ring an' gasping in her gore:
Sae shortly you shall see me bright,
A burning an' a shining light.

My heart-warm love to guid auld Glen,
The ace an' wale of honest men:
When bending down wi' auld grey hairs,
Beneath the load of years and cares,
May He who made him still support him,
An' views beyond the grave comfort him,
His worthy fam'ly, far and near,
God bless them a' wi' grace and gear!

My auld school-fellow, preacher Willie,
The manly tar, my mason Billie,
An' Auchenhay, I wish him joy;
If he's a parent, lass or boy,
May he be dad, and Meg the mither,
Just five-and-forty years thegither!
An' no forgetting wabster Charlie,
I'm tauld he offers very fairly.
An' Lord, remember singing Sannock,
Wi' hale breeks, saxpence, an' a bannock,
An' next my auld acquaintance, Nancy,
Since she is fitted to her fancy;

An' her kind stars hae airted till her
A good chiel wi' a pickle siller.
My kindest, best respects I sen' it,
To cousin Kate an' sister Janet:
Tell them, frae me, wi' chiels be cautious,
For, faith, they'll aiblins fin' them fashious:
To grant a heart is fairly civil,
But to grant a maidenhead's the devil.
An' lastly, Jamie, for yoursel,
May guardian angels tak a spell,
An' steer you seven miles south o' hell:
But first, before you see heaven's glory,
May ye get monie a merry story,
Monie a laugh, and monie a drink,
And aye eneugh o' needfu' clink.

Now fare ye weel, an' joy be wi' you,
For my sake this I beg it o' you,
Assist poor Simson a' ye can,
Ye'll fin' him just an honest man;
Sae I conclude, and quat my chanter,
Your's, saint or sinner,

ROB THE RANTER.

Tait, of Glenconner, accompanied Burns to Nithsdale in 1788, and advised him respecting the farm of Ellisland.—"I am just returned," says the Poet to a correspondent, "from Millar's farm. My old friend, whom I took with me, was highly pleased with the bargain, and advised me to accept of it. He is the most intelligent, sensible farmer in the country, and his advice has staggered me a good deal. I have the two plans before me (farming and excise); I shall endeavour to balance them to the best of my judgment, and fix on the most eligible. On the whole, if I find Mr. Millar in the same favorable disposition as when I saw him last, I shall, in all probability, turn farmer." To a correspondent of another complexion and character, Burns wrote, regarding "Old Glencorner,"—"I am thinking my farming scheme will yet hold. A worthy, intelligent farmer, my father's friend and my own, has been with me on the spot: he thinks the bargain practicable. I am myself,

on a more serious review of the lands, much better pleased with them. I won't trust this to any body in writing but you."

The poem is one of those hasty and every-day-business-like effusions which Burns occasionally penned. Though not at all equal to some of his earlier epistles, yet it is well worth preserving, as a proof of the ease with which he could wind verse round any topic, and conduct the duties and the courtesies of life in song. His account of having "grown sae cursed douce," and scorching himself at the fire—

"Perusing Bunyan, Brown, an' Boston,"

is archly introduced. The persons to whom a part of the letter alludes, were of Glencomner's household or his neighbours. The "manly tar" was probably Richard Brown.

ON THE

BIRTH OF A POSTHUMOUS CHILD.

Sweet flow'ret, pledge o' meikle love,
And ward o' mony a pray'r,
What heart o' stane wad thou na move,
Sae helpless, sweet, and fair!

November hirples o'er the lea,
Chill on thy lovely form;
And gane, alas! the shelt'ring tree;
Should shield thee frae the storm.

May He who gives the rain to pour,
And wings the blast to blaw,
Protect thee frae the driving show'r,
The bitter frost and snaw!

May He, the friend of woe and want,
Who heals life's various stounds,
Protect and guard the mother-plant,
And heal her cruel wounds!

But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
Fair on the summer-morn:
Now feebly bends she in the blast,
Unsheltered and forlorn.

Blest be thy bloom, thou lovely gem,
Unscath'd by ruffian hand!
And from thee many a parent stem
Arise to deck our land!

"These stanzas," says Burns in his memoranda, "were composed on the birth of a child in peculiar circumstances of family distress." A father was carried to the grave on the day his only daughter was born; a type of what happened at no distant date in the Poet's own household. Not only are the chief circumstances of the case applicable, but the very words which he used in expressing the woe of another, give an image of what was suffered in Burns'-street, in July, 1796. He speaks of the "mother-plant,"—

> "But late she flourish'd, rooted fast,
> Fair on the summer morn;
> Now feebly bends she in the blast,
> Unsheltered and forlorn."

The sheltering tree was removed in both cases, and tender flowerets exposed to the storm. I shall never forget the time when Burns's boys appeared in Dumfries streets in mourning for their father' death. All eyes were turned in sympathy on them—their weepers, as the white cambric on their coat-cuffs were called, and their forlorn and wondering looks, live in more memories than mine.

TO MISS CRUIKSHANKS,

A VERY YOUNG LADY.

Written on the blank leaf of a book, presented to her by the Author.

Beauteous rose-bud, young and gay,
Blooming in thy early May,
Never may'st thou, lovely flow'r,
Chilly shrink in sleety show'r!
Never Boreas' hoary path,
Never Eurus' poisonous breath,
Never baleful stellar lights,
Taint thee with untimely blights!
Never, never reptile thief
Riot on thy virgin leaf!
Nor even Sol too fiercely view
Thy bosom blushing still with dew!

May'st thou long, sweet crimson gem,
Richly deck thy native stem:
'Till some evening, sober, calm,
Dropping dews and breathing balm,
While all around the woodland rings,
And ev'ry bird thy requiem sings;
Thou, amid the dirgeful sound,
Shed thy dying honors round,
And resign to parent earth
The loveliest form she e'er gave birth.

Burns often intimated his friendships—or attachments, tenderer still—in verse or prose, on the blank leaf of a favorite book, and then presented the volume to the object of his regard. I have seen several of those precious presents. It has been remarked that he was most attached to ladies whose voices were sweet and harmonious, or who excelled in music. Of the spell

which music threw over him, Professor Walker gives a very graphic account:—"About the end of October, I called for him at the house of a friend, whose daughter, though not more than twelve, was a considerable proficient in music. I found him seated by the harpsicord of this young lady, listening with the keenest interest to his own verses, which she sang and accompanied, and adjusting them to the music by repeated trials of the effect. In this occupation he was totally absorbed; and it was difficult to draw his attention from it for a moment; and it is to the enthusiasm which the nature of his undertaking inspired that the excellence of its execution must be ascribed. Had his ardor been less, I should probably have regretted to see his genius no longer left free to the impulse of inclination, and the excitement of interesting occurrences, but employed in amendment or imitation, and partly expended in overcoming the difficulties occasioned by an additional circumspection, both in subject and measure."

WILLIE CHALMERS.

I.

Wi' braw new branks in mickle pride,
And eke a braw new brechan,
My Pegasus I'm got astride,
And up Parnassus pechin;
Whiles owre a bush wi' downward crush;
The doited beastie stammers;
Then up he gets and off he sets
For sake o' Willie Chalmers.

II.

I doubt na, lass, that weel-kenn'd name
May cost a pair o' blushes;
I am nae stranger to your fame
For his warm urged wishes.
Your bonnie face sae mild and sweet,
His honest heart enamours,
And faith ye'll no be lost a whit,
Tho' waired on Willie Chalmers.

III.

Auld Truth hersel might swear ye're fair,
And Honor safely back her,
And Modesty assume your air,
And ne'er a ane mistak' her:
And sic twa love-inspiring e'en
Might fire even holy palmers:
Nae wonder then they've fatal been
To honest Willie Chalmers.

IV.

I doubt na fortune may you shore
Some mim-mou'd pouthered priestie,
Fu' lifted up wi' Hebrew lore,
And band upon his breastie:
But oh! what signifies to you,
His lexicons and grammars;
The feeling heart's the royal blue,
And that's wi' Willie Chalmers.

V.

Some gapin' glowrin' countra laird,
May warsle for your favor;
May claw his lug, and straik his beard,
And host up some palaver.
My bonnie maid, before ye wed
Sic clumsy-witted hammers,
Seek Heaven for help, and barefit skelp
Awa' wi' Willie Chalmers.

VI.

Forgive the Bard! my fond regard
For ane that shares my bosom,
Inspires my muse to gie 'm his dues,
For de'il a hair I roose him.
May powers aboon unite you soon,
And fructify your amours,—
And every year come in mair dear
To you and Willie Chalmers.

The pen of the Poet was ever ready at the call of his friends. When a country squire fell in love, Burns supplied him with a song in praise of his mistress; when the minister of one parish doubted the Scripture doctrine of the incumbent of another parish, he brought rhyme to his aid: nay, on this occasion he forgets the duty of poetic "black-sole," and absolutely courts a young lady for a friend, in very persuasive rhyme. This poetic curiosity was first given to the world by Lockhart in his life of the bard: he copied it from a small collection of MSS. sent by Burns to Lady Harriet Don, accompanied by the following explanation: "W. Chalmers, a gentleman in Ayrshire, a particular friend of mine asked me to write a poetic epistle to a young lady, his Dulcinea. I had seen her, but was scarcely acquainted with her, and wrote as follows." William Chalmers was, in those days, a writer in Ayr, and a staunch comrade of the Poet: he was his correspondent also: but only one of the letters of Burns has survived the change which time and death make. have not heard that the lady yielded to the influence of verse: women are seldom rhymed into wedlock.

LYING AT A REVEREND FRIEND'S HOUSE ONE NIGHT, THE AUTHOR LEFT THE FOLLOWING

VERSES

IN THE ROOM WHERE HE SLEPT.

I.

O THOU dread Power, who reign'st above!
I know Thou wilt me hear,
When for this scene of peace and love
I make my prayer sincere.

II.

The hoary sire—the mortal stroke,
Long, long, be pleased to spare;
To bless his filial little flock
And show what good men are.

III.

She, who her lovely offspring eyes
With tender hopes and fears,
O, bless her with a mother's joys,
But spare a mother's tears!

IV.

Their hope—their stay—their darling youth,
In manhood's dawning blush—
Bless him, thou God of love and truth,
Up to a parent's wish!

V.

The beauteous, seraph sister-band,
With earnest tears I pray,
Thou know'st the snares on ev'ry hand—
Guide Thou their steps alway.

VI.

When soon or late they reach that coast,
O'er life's rough ocean driven,
May they rejoice, no wanderer lost,
A family in heaven!

Of the origin of these verses, Gilbert Burns gives the following account:—"The first time Robert heard the spinnet played upon was at the house of Dr. Lawrie, then minister of Loudon, now in Glasgow, having given up the parish in favor of his son. Dr. Lawrie has several daughters—one of them played; the father and the mother led down the dance; the rest of the sisters, the brother, the Poet, and the other guests mixed in it. It was a delightful family-scene for our Poet, then lately introduced to the world. His mind was roused to a poetic enthusiasm, and the stanzas were left in the room where he slept. It was to Dr. Lawrie that Dr. Blacklock's letter was addressed; which my brother, in his letter to Dr. Moore, mentions as a reason for his going to Edinburgh."

The compliment which the bard paid to the minister of Loudon might have been extended to others of his reverend friends.

Not only did those who loved the New Light receive him with kindness, but when his poems were published, sundry of the Old-Light pastors smiled, and forgot how roughly he had handled them in his lampoons. From the letters before me, I have every reason to believe that even "Daddie Auld" felt the merits of the Poet, and grew less stern. It is a fact, that in the matter of church censure, he was at last tolerant to his tuneful parishioner. The minister of the parish is the natural judge of the merits of his flock; and when a young man manifests any powers, he looks up to his pastor as a patron. Many instances might be given; one is known to the world:—the eminent oriental scholar, Professor Murray, found his first friend in the minister of his native parish.

TO GAVIN HAMILTON, Esq.

MAUCHLINE.

(RECOMMENDING A BOY.)

Mosgaville, May 3, 1786.

I.

I HOLD it, Sir, my bounden duty,
To warn you how that Master Tootie,
  Alias, Laird M'Gaun,
Was here to hire yon lad away
'Bout whom ye spak the tither day,
  An' wad hae don't aff han':
But lest he learn the callan tricks,
  As, faith, I muckle doubt him,
Like scrapin' out auld Crummie's nicks,
  An' tellin' lies about them;
    As lieve then, I'd have then,
      Your clerkship he should sair,
    If sae be, ye may be
      Not fitted otherwhere.

II.

Altho' I say't, he's gleg enough,
An' bout a house that's rude an' rough,
The boy might learn to swear;
But then wi' you, he'll be sae taught,
An' get sic fair example straught,
I havena ony fear.
Ye'll catechize him every quirk,
An' shore him weel wi' hell;
An' gar him follow to the kirk—
—Ay when ye gang yoursel.
If ye then, maun be then
Frae hame this comin' Friday;
Then please Sir, to lea'e Sir,
The orders wi' your lady.

III.

My word of honor I hae gien,
In Paisley John's, that night at e'en,
To meet the Warld's worm;
To try to get the twa to gree,
An' name the airles * an' the fee,
In legal mode an' form:
I ken he weel a snick can draw,
When simple bodies let him;
An' if a Devil be at a',
In faith he's sure to get him.
To phrase you, an' praise you,
Ye ken your Laureat scorns:
The pray'r still, you share still,
Of grateful Minstrel Burns.

Verse seems to have been the natural speech of Burns; even in this hasty epistle how easily and concisely he tells all he has to say! Common country matters could not have been more

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* The airles—earnest money.

clearly related, or with less waste of words in prose. This Master Tootie, Cromek informs us, lived in Mauchline and dealt in cows. It was his common practice to cut the nicks or markings from the horns of cattle to disguise their age and so bring a higher price. He was an artful, contriving person: hence he is called a "snick-drawer," an epithet which the bard had already applied to a more august personage—the devil. The Poet, it would appear, had read the fine old ballad of "Leader Haughs and Yarrow," when he signed himself "Minstrel Burns."—

"But Minstrel Burns cannot assuage
His grief, while life endureth,
To see the changes of this age,
That fleeting time procureth,
For mony a place stands in hard case,
Where blythe fowk kend nae sorrow,
With Homes that dwalt on Leader Side,
And Scotts that dwalt on Yarrow."

The Minstrel of the Border sings of the mutability of family greatness; while the Minstrel of Ayrshire, who seems to have cared little about old descents, speaks of the dubious morality of one neighbour, and the disregard of another for the ordinances of the Old Light:—

"Ye'll catechize him every quirk,
An' shore him weel wi' hell;
An' gar him follow to the kirk—
—Ay when ye gang yoursel."

TO MR. M'ADAM,

OF CRAIGEN-GILLAN.

Sir, o'er a gill I gat your card,
I trow it made me proud;
See wha tak's notice o' the bard!
I lap and cry'd fu' loud.

Now deil-ma-care about their jaw,
The senseless, gawky million:
I'll cock my nose aboon them a'—
I'm roos'd by Craigen-Gillan!

'Twas noble, Sir; 'twas like yoursel,
To grant your high protection:
A great man's smile ye ken fu' well,
Is ay a blest infection.

Tho' by his* banes who in a tub
Match'd Macedonian Sandy!
On my ain legs thro' dirt and dub,
I independent stand ay.—

And when those legs to gude, warm kail,
Wi' welcome canna bear me;
A lee dyke-side, a sybow-tail,
And barley-scone shall cheer me.

Heaven spare you lang to kiss the breath
O' many flow'ry simmers!
And bless your bonnie lasses baith,
I'm tauld they're loosome kimmers!

And GOD bless young Dunaskin's laird,
The blossom of our gentry!
And may he wear an auld man's beard,
A credit to his country.

Burns, when asked to dinner, answered in rhyme; if desired to say grace at a meal, he measured it out at once: he made returns to tax collectors in verse, and sometimes, when he wished to have a shoe put on his horse, he made the request in song. Instances will be given, in all these cases, in the course of these volumes. The present poem is a hasty, unpremeditated effusion: In the commencement of his poetic career, Burns, received an obliging letter from the laird of Craigen-Gillan, to whom his friend Woodburn was factor; and took up a sheet of paper, as he "sat owre a gill," and thanked him in verse. The Bard, amid his joy, forgets not that he is independent; and, in asserting his independence, he remembers that old age will come, and perhaps poverty—but then "a lee dyke-side and barley scone" would cheer one who had been accustomed to simple fare."

* Diogenes.

ANSWER TO A POETICAL EPISTLE

SENT TO THE AUTHOR BY A TAILOR.

What ails ye now, ye lousie b—h,
To thresh my back at sic a pitch?
Losh, man! hae mercy wi' your natch,
Your bodkin's bauld,
I didna suffer ha'f sae much
Frae Daddie Auld.

What tho' at times when I grow crouse,
I gie the dames a random pouse,
Is that enough for you to souse
Your servant sae?
Gae mind your seam, ye prick a louse,
An' jag the flae.

King David o' poetic brief,
Wrought 'mang the lasses sic mischief,
As fill'd his after life wi' grief,
An' bluidy rants,
An' yet he's ranked among the chief
O' lang-syne saunts.

And maybe, Tam, for a' my cants,
My wicked rhymes, an' dru'ken rants,
I'll gie auld cloven Clootie's haunts
An' unco slip yet,
An' snugly sit among the saunts
At Davie's hip get.

But fegs, the Session says I maun
Gae fa' upo' anither plan,
Than garrin lasses cowp the cran
Clean heels owre body,
An' sairly thole their mither's ban
Afore the howdy.

This leads me on, to tell for sport,
How I did wi' the Session sort,
Auld Clinkum at the inner port
Cried three times—"Robin!
Come hither, lad, an' answer for't,
Ye're blamed for jobbin'."

Wi' pinch I pat a Sunday's face on,
An' snoov'd away before the Session:
I made an open fair confession—
I scorn'd to lee;
An' syne Mess John, beyond expression,
Fell foul o' me.

* * * * *

A tailor in the neighbourhood of Mauchline took it upon him, it seems, to lecture Burns in verse upon his loose conversation and behaviour. The Poet answered in a strain which must have made the other, as Hamilton says,

"Strangely fidge and fike."

It is, however, too free and unceremonious towards the conclusion, and I have been compelled to omit no less than five verses, in which the Poet gives a description of his interview with the kirk-session, and relates some of the conversation that ensued.

The knight of the thimble acquits himself in verse nearly as well as other rhymers who have not the advantage of being poets. He commences by saying he hears that Burns is about to go over the sea, and that the lasses whom he loves so much are in tears; he intimates his concern for the peril of the Poet's soul, put in jeopardy, as he avers, by profane swearing, and by his attachment to the dames of Kyle:—

"Fu' weel ye ken ye'll gang to hell,
Gin ye persist in doing ill—
Waes me ye're hurlin' down the hill
Withouten dread,
An' ye'll get leave to swear ye're fill
After ye're dead.

"O Rab! lay by thae foolish tricks,
An' steer nae mair the foolish sex,
Or some day ye'll come through the pricks
An' that ye'll see;
Ye'll find hard living at auld Nicks—
I'm wae for thee."

Our monitor now remembers that he has himself committed, like Burns, the three-fold sin of rhyme, loose speech, and light behaviour; and passes from the singular to the plural with much complacency:—

"We're owre like those who think it fit
To stuff their noddles fu' o' wit,
An' yet content in darkness sit,
Wha shun the light,
To let them see down to the pit
That lang dark night.

"But farewell, Rab, I maun awa':
May He that made us keep us a'!
For that wad be a dreadfu' fa',
An' hurt us sair;
Lad, ye wad never mend ava,
Sae, Rab, tak' care."

No wonder that Burns said his success had produced a shoal of ill-spawned monsters in Scottish verse; the tailor was, however, one of the worst. I have heard it surmised that Burns wrote the monitory letter himself for the sake of the answer. To be able to write down to the level of the verses I have quoted—and they are the best—is a compliment to his genius, but not a just one.

LINES

WRITTEN ON A BANK-NOTE.

Wae worth thy power, thou cursed leaf,
Fell source o' a' my woe and grief;
For lack o' thee I've lost my lass,
For lack o' thee I scrimp my glass.
I see the children of affliction
Unaided, through thy cursed restriction.
I've seen the oppressor's cruel smile
Amid his hapless victim's spoil:
And for thy potence vainly wished,
To crush the villain in the dust.
For lack o' thee, I leave this much-lov'd shore,
Never, perhaps, to greet old Scotland more.

R. B.

The Bank-note, on the back of which these characteristic lines were endorsed, came into the hands of James Gracie, banker in Dumfries; he knew the hand-writing of the Poet, and preserved it as a curiosity. There is no day of the month or year, but it is dated from Kyle, and was probable written during the year 1786: these lines point to that period:—

"For lack o' thee I've lost my lass,
For lack o' thee I scrimp my glass.
For lack o' thee, I leave this much-lov'd shore,
Never, perhaps, to greet old Scotland more."

A DREAM.

"Thoughts, words, and deeds, the statute blames with reason;
But surely dreams were ne'er indicted treason."

[On reading, in the public papers, the "Laureat's Ode," with the other parade of June 4, 1786, the author was no sooner dropt asleep, than he imagined himself transported to the birth-day levee; and in his dreaming fancy made the following "Address."]

GUID-MORNIN' to your Majesty!
May Heaven augment your blisses,
On ev'ry new birth-day ye see,
A humble poet wishes!
My bardship here, at your levee,
On sic a day as this is,
Is sure an uncouth sight to see,
Amang thae birth-day dresses
Sae fine this day.

I see ye're complimented thrang,
By many a lord an' lady;
"God save the king!" 's a cuckoo sang
That's unco easy said ay;
The poets, too, a venal gang,
Wi' rhymes weel turn'd and ready,
Wad gar you trow ye ne'er do wrang,
But ay unerring steady,
On sic a day.

For me! before a monarch's face,
Ev'n there I winna flatter;
For neither pension, post, nor place,
Am I your humble debtor:
So, nae reflection on your grace,
Your kingship to bespatter;
There's monie waur been o' the race,
And aiblins ane been better
Than you this day.

'Tis very true, my sov'reign king,
My skill may weel be doubted:
But facts are chiels that winna ding,
An' downa be disputed:
Your royal nest, beneath your wing,
Is e'en right reft an' clouted,
And now the third part of the string,
An' less, will gang about it
Than did ae day.

Far be't frae me that I aspire
To blame your legislation,
Or say, ye wisdom want, or fire,
To rule this mighty nation!
But, faith! I muckle doubt, my sire,
Ye've trusted ministration
To chaps, wha, in a barn or byre,
Wad better fill'd their station
Than courts yon day.

And now ye've gien auld Britain peace,
Her broken shins to plaister;
Your sair taxation does her fleece,
Till she has scarce a tester;
For me, thank God, my life's a lease,
Nae bargain wearing faster,
Or, faith! I fear, that, wi' the geese,
I shortly boost to pasture
I' the craft some day.

I'm no mistrusting Willie Pitt,
When taxes he enlarges,
(An' Will's a true guid fallow's get,
A name not envy spairges,)
That he intends to pay your debt,
An' lessen a' your charges;
But, G-d-sake! let nae saving-fit
Abridge your bonnie barges
An' boats this day.

Adieu, my Liege! may freedom geck
Beneath your high protection;
An' may ye rax Corruption's neck,
And gie her for dissection!
But since I'm here, I'll no neglect,
In loyal, true affection,
To pay your Queen, with due respect,
My fealty an' subjection
This great birth-day.

Hail, Majesty Most Excellent!
While nobles strive to please ye,
Will ye except a compliment
A simple poet gi'es ye?
Thae bonnie bairntime, Heav'n has lent,
Still higher may they heeze ye
In bliss, till fate some day is sent,
For ever to release ye
Frae care that day.

For you, young potentate o' Wales,
I tell your Highness fairly,
Down pleasure's stream' wi' swelling sails,
I'm tauld ye're driving rarely;
But some day ye may gnaw your nails,
An' curse your folly sairly,
That e'er ye brak Diana's pales,
Or rattl'd dice wi' Charlie
By night or day.

Yet aft a ragged cowte's been known
To mak a noble aiver;
So, ye may doucely fill a throne,
For a' their clish-ma-claver:
There, him at Agincourt wha shone,
Few better were or braver;
And yet, wi' funny, queer Sir John,
He was an unco shaver
For monie a day.

For you, right rev'rend Osnaburg,
Nane sets the lawn-sleeve sweeter,
Altho' a ribbon at your lug,
Wad been a dress completer:
As ye disown yon paughty dog
That bears the keys of Peter,
Then, swith! an' get a wife to hug,
Or, trouth! ye'll stain the mitre
Some luckless day.

Young, royal Tarry Breeks, I learn,
Ye've lately come athwart her;
A glorious galley,* stem an' stern,
Weel rigg'd for Venus' barter;
But first hang out, that she'll discern
Your hymeneal charter,
Then heave aboard your grapple airn,
An', large upon her quarter,
Come full that day.

Ye, lastly, bonnie blossoms a',
Ye royal lasses dainty,
Heav'n mak you guid as weel as braw,
An' gie you lads a-plenty:
But sneer na British boys awa',
For kings are unco scant ay;
An' German gentles are but sma',
They're better just than want ay
On onie day.

* Alluding to the newspaper account of a certain Royal Sailor's amour.

God bless you a'! consider now,
Ye're unco muckle dautet;
But ere the course o' life be thro',
It may be bitter sautet:
An' I hae seen their coggie fou,
That yet hae tarrow't at it;
But or the day was done, I trow
The laggen they hae clautet
Fu' clean that day.

To "The Dream," I have heard, the neglect shown by the Government to the Poet imputed. No doubt it was otherwise than acceptable at court, and we know that Mrs Dunlop and Mrs. Stewart of Stair, solicited, in vain, to have it omitted in the Edinburgh edition. It is likely that the suppression of the poem would have been of no benefit to the bard. The ear of his Majesty, like that of Pitt and Dundas, was not to be charmed by sweet sounds: he who mistook Pye for a poet was not likely to regard Burns as one. Nor were his ministers more merciful than their master to the tuneful and the inspired: What bard could command a dozen votes for a borough? Interest and influence were every thing, and genius was as nothing. Few of the commentators have ventured to discuss the merits of "The Dream." They are of a high order—the gaiety as well as keenness of the satire, and the vehement rapidity of the verse, are not the only attractions. Even the prose introduction is sarcastic—the Poet, on reading the Laureat's Ode, fell asleep—a likely consequence, for the birth-day strains of those times were something of the dullest.

The poem seems prophetic; the young potentate of Wales lived to rue that he had "broken Diana's pales, and rattled dice with Charlie;" nor was the Bishop of Osnaburg long in getting a wife, as well as a ribbon to his lug, but this did not hinder him from going wrong in the very way intimated by the Poet. The hymeneal charter, which he proposes to the Royal Sailor, in the affair of the "glorious galley," or the early marriage which he recommends to the "bonnie blossoms—the royal lasses dainty" might have been beneficial to Britain. The last verse of the poem seems to intimate the coming of some great change among the nations: had the island spirit not stood firm, a scattering, such as France and other kingdoms endured, might have taken place. The poem, it must be acknowledged, is uncommonly bold and audacious.

A BARD'S EPITAPH.

Is there a whim-inspired fool,
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,
Let him draw near;
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,
And drap a tear.

Is there a bard of rustic song,
Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,
That weekly this area throng,
O, pass not by!
But, with a frater-feeling strong,
Here, heave a sigh.

Is there a man, whose judgment cle ar,
Can others teach the course to steer,
Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,
Wild as the wave;
Here pause—and, through the startin g tear,
Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below,
Was quick to learn, and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow,
And softer flame,
But thoughtless follies laid him low,
And stain'd his name!

Reader, attend—whether thy soul
Soars fancy's flights beyond the pole,
Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,
In low pursuit;
Know, prudent, cautious self-control,
Is wisdom's root.

"Whom did the poet intend," says Wordsworth, "should be thought of as occupying that grave, over which, after

modestly setting forth the moral discernment and warm affections of the 'poor inhabitant' it is supposed to be inscribed, that

> 'Thoughtless follies laid him low
> And stained his name.'

Who but himself,—himself anticipating the too probable termination of his own course? Here is a sincere and solemn avowal—a public declaration from his own will—a confession at once devout, poetical, and human—a history in the shape of a prophecy! What more was required of the biographer than to have put his seal to the writing, testifying that the foreboding had been realized, and the record was authentic!"

A far different opinion is given by Jeffrey, in the Edinburgh Review:—"The leading vice in Burns' character, and the cardinal deformity of all his productions, was his contempt, or affectation of contempt, for prudence, decency, and regularity; and his admiration of thoughtlessness, oddity, and vehement sensibility:—his belief, in short, in the dispensing power of genius and social feeling in all matters of morality and common sense. He is perpetually making a parade of his thoughtlessness, inflammability, and imprudence, and talking with much complacency of the offence he has occasioned to the sober part of mankind." On this topic, Wordsworth must again be heard.—"When a man, self-elected into the office of a public judge of the literature and life of his contemporaries, can have the audacity to go these lengths in framing a summary of the contents of volumes that are scattered over every quarter of the globe, and extant in almost every village in Scotland, to give the lie to his labors, we must not wonder if, in the plentitude of his concern for the interests of abstract morality, the infatuated slanderer should have found no obstacle to prevent him from insinuating that the Poet, whose writings are to this degree stained and disfigured, was one of the sons of fancy and song, who spend in vain superfluities the money that belongs of right to the pale industrious tradesman and his famishing infants, and who rave about friendship and philosophy in a tavern, while their wives' hearts are breaking at their own cheerless fire-side, and their children pining in solitary poverty."

THE TWA DOGS.

A TALE.

'Twas in that place o' Scotland's isle
That bears the name o' Auld King Coil,
Upon a bonnie day in June,
When wearing through the afternoon,
Twa dogs that were na thrang at hame,
Forgather'd ance upon a time.

The first I'll name, they ca'd him Cæsar,
Was keepit for his honor's pleasure;
His hair, his size, his mouth, his lugs,
Show'd he was nane o' Scotland's dogs;
But whalpit some place far abroad,
Where sailors gang to fish for cod.

His locked, letter'd, braw brass collar
Show'd him the gentleman and scholar;
But though he was o' high degree,
The fient a pride—nae pride had he;
But wad hae spent an hour caressin',
Even wi' a tinkler-gypsey's messin'.
At kirk or market, mill or smiddie,
Nae tawted tyke, though e'er sae duddie,
But he wad stan't, as glad to see him,
And stroan't on stanes and hillocks wi' him.

The tither was a ploughman's collie,
A rhyming, ranting, raving billie,
Wha for his friend an' comrade had him,
And in his freaks had Luath ca'd him,
After some dog in Highland sang,*
Was made lang syne—Lord knows how lang.

He was a gash an' faithful tyke,
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke.

* Cuchillin's dog in Ossian's Fingal.

His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face,
Ay gat him friends in ilka place.
His breast was white, his touzie back
Weel clad wi' coat o' glossy black;
His gaucie tail, wi' upward curl,
Hung o'er his hurdies wi' a swirl.

Nae doubt but they were fain o' ither,
An' unco pack an' thick thegither;
Wi' social nose whyles snuff'd and snowkit,
Whyles mice and moudieworts they howkit;
Whyles scour'd awa in lang excursion,
An' worry'd ither in diversion;
Until wi' daffin weary grown,
Upon a knowe they sat them down,
And there began a lang digression
About the lords o' the creation.

CÆSAR.

I' ve aften wonder'd, honest Luath,
What sort o' life poor dogs like you have;
An' when the gentry's life I saw,
What way poor bodies liv'd ava.

Our laird gets in his racked rents,
His coals, his kain, and a' his stents;
He rises when he likes himsel;
His flunkies answer at the bell;
He ca's his coach, he ca's his horse;
He draws a bonnie silken purse
As lang's my tail, whare, through the steeks,
The yellow letter'd Geordie keeks.

Frae morn to e'en it's nought but toiling,
At baking, roasting, frying, boiling;
An' though the gentry first are stechin,
Yet even the ha' folk fill their pechan
Wi' sauce, ragouts, and sic like trashtrie,
That's little short o' downright wastrie.

Our whipper-in, wee, blastit wonner,
Poor worthless elf, it eats a dinner,
Better than ony tenant man
His honor has in a' the lan';
An' what poor cot-folk pit their painch in,
I own its past my comprehension.

LUATH.

Trowth, Cæsar, whyles they're fash't enough;
A cotter howkin in a sheugh,
Wi' dirty stanes biggin' a dyke,
Baring a quarry, and sic like;
Himself, a wife, he thus sustains,
A smytrie o' wee duddie weans,
An' nought but his han' darg, to keep
Them right and tight in thack an' rape.

An when they meet wi' sair disasters,
Like loss o' health, or want o' masters,
Ye maist wad think, a wee touch langer,
An' they maun starve o' cauld and hunger;
But, how it comes, I never kenn'd yet,
They're maistly wonderfu' contented:
An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizz ies,
Are bred in sic a way as this is.

CÆSAR.

But then to see how ye're negleckit,
How huff'd and cuff'd, and disrespeckit!
L—d, man, our gentry care as little
For delvers, ditchers, an' sic cattle;
They gang as saucy by poor folk,
As I wad by a stinking brock.
I've notic'd, on our Laird's court-day,
An' mony a time my heart's been wae,
Poor tenant bodies, scant o' cash,
How they maun thole a factor's snash:
He'll stamp an' threaten, curse an' swear,

He'll apprehend them, poind their gear;
While they maun stan', wi' aspect humble,
An' hear it a', an' fear and tremble!
I see how folk live that hae riches;
But surely poor folk maun be wretches!

LUATH.

They're no sae wretched's ane wad think;
Tho' constantly on poortith's brink:
They're sae accustom'd wi' the sight,
The view o't gies them little fright.

Then chance an' fortune are sae guided,
They're ay in less or mair provided;
An' tho' fatigu'd wi' close employment,
A blink o' rest's a sweet enjoyment.

The dearest comfort o' their lives,
Their grushie weans an' faithfu' wives;
The prattling things are just their pride,
That sweetens a' their fire-side;
An' whyles twalpennie worth o' nappy
Can mak' the bodies unco happy;
They lay aside their private cares,
To mind the Kirk and State affairs:
They'll talk o' patronage and priests,
Wi' kindling fury in their breasts,
Or tell what new taxation's comin',
And ferlie at the folk in Lon'on.

As bleak-fac'd Hallowmass returns,
They get the jovial, ranting kirns,
When rural life, o' ev'ry station,
Unite in common recreation;
Love blinks, Wit slaps, an' social Mirth,
Forgets there's Care upo' the earth.

That merry day the year begins,
They bar the door on frosty win's;

The nappy reeks wi' mantling ream,
An' sheds a heart-inspiring steam;
The luntin' pipe, an' sneeshin mill,
Are handed round wi' right guid will;
The cantie auld folks crackin' crouse,
The young anes rantin' thro' the house,—
My heart has been sae fain to see them,
That I for joy hae barkit wi' them.

Still it's owre true that ye hae said,
Sic game is now owre aften play'd.
There's monie a creditable stock
O' decent, honest, fawsont fo'k,
Are riven out baith root and branch,
Some rascal's pridefu' greed to quench,
Wha thinks to knit himsel the faster
In favor wi' some gentle master,
Wha' aiblins, thrang a parliamentin',
For Britain's guid his saul indentin'—

CÆSAR.

Haith, lad, ye little ken about it;
For Britain's guid! guid faith, I dou bt it.
Say rather, gaun as Premiers lead him,
An' saying aye or no's they bid him:
At operas an' plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading;
Or may be, in a frolic daft,
To Hague or Calais takes a waft,
To mak a tour, an' tak' a whirl,
To learn *bon ton*, an' see the worl'.

There, at Vienna or Versailles,
He rives his father's auld entails;
Or by Madrid he takes the rout,
To thrum guitars, an' fecht wi' nowt;
Or down Italian vista startles,
Wh-re-hunting amang groves o' myrtles;

Then bouses drumly German water,
To mak' himsel' look fair and fatter,
An' clear the consequential sorrows,
Love-gifts of Carnival signoras.
For Britain's guid!—for her destruction!
Wi' dissipation, feud, an' faction.

LUATH.

Hech man! dear sirs! is that the gate
They waste sae mony a braw estate!
Are we sae foughten an' harass'd
For gear to gang that gate at last!

O would they stay aback frae courts,
An' please themsels wi' countra sports,
It wad for ev'ry ane be better,
The Laird, the Tenant, an' the Cotter!
For thae frank, rantin', ramblin' billies,
Fient haet o' them's ill-hearted fellows;
Except for breakin' o' their timmer,
Or speakin' lightly o' their limmer,
Or shootin' o' a hare or moor-cock,
The ne'er a bit they're ill to poor folk.

But will ye tell me, Master Cæsar,
Sure great folk's life's a life o' pleasure?
Nae cauld or hunger e'er can steer them,
The vera thought o't need na fear them.

CÆSAR.

L—d, man, were ye but whiles whare I am,
The gentles ye wad ne'er envy 'em.

It's true they needna starve or sweat,
Thro' winter's cauld, or simmer's heat;
They've nae sair wark to craze their banes,
An' fill auld age wi' grips an' granes:
But human bodies are sic fools,
For a' their colleges and schools,

That when nae real ills perplex them,
They mak enow themsels to vex them;
An' ay the less they hae to sturt them,
In like proportion less will hurt them.

A country fellow at the pleugh,
His acres till'd, he's right eneugh;
A country girl at her wheel,
Her dizzen's done, she's unco weel:
But Gentlemen, an' Ladies warst,
Wi' ev'n down want o' wark are curst.
They loiter, lounging, lank, an' lazy;
Tho' deil haet ails them, yet uneasy;
Their days insipid, dull, an' tasteless;
Their nights unquiet, lang, an' restless;
An' even their sports, their balls an' races,
Their galloping thro' public places,
There's sic parade, sic pomp, an' art,
The joy can scarcely reach the heart.
The men cast out in party matches,
Then sowther a' in deep debauches;
Ae night they're mad wi' drink and wh-ring,
Niest day their life is past enduring.
The Ladies arm-in-arm in clusters,
As great and gracious a' as sisters;
But hear their absent thoughts o' ither,
They're a' run deils an' jads thegither.
Whyles, o'er the wee bit cup an' platie,
They sip the scandal potion pretty;
Or lee-lang nights, wi' crabbit leuks
Pore owre the devil's pictur'd beuks;
Stake on a chance a farmer's stackyard,
An' cheat like onie unhang'd blackguard.

There's some exception, man an' woman;
But this is Gentry's life in common.

By this, the sun was out o' sight,
An' darker gloaming brought the night:

The bum-clock humm'd wi' lazy drone ;
The kye stood rowtin i' the loan ;
When up they gat, and shook their lugs,
Rejoic'd they were na men but dogs ;
An' each took aff his several way,
Resolv'd to meet some ither day.

On the 17th of February, 1786, Burns writes to John Richmond—"I have completed my poem on the Dogs, but have not shown it to the world." It is difficult to fix dates to compositions, some of which were struck off at one heat of fancy, while others were elaborated slowly out, as time suited or inclination willed. Mr. Neil, to whose kindness I am much indebted, relates that, in a jaunt through the land of Burns, he met with Henry Cowan and Hugh his brother, who were early acquaintances of the Poet's family—members of the club, and remembered the discussion of the question regarding marriage, in which the young Poet spoke with great ardor and eloquence, and was successful. These brothers said they happened to be aiding Burns and his father with a load of wood at Coilsfield, when, in a field beside them, the Bard's collie and a collared Newfoundlander met and—

> "Scoured awa in lang excursion,
> And worried other in diversion,"

and grew very social. Burns looked on them often, and smiled and said nothing; but when the poem was published, they knew to what period his thoughts had wandered as he composed it.

In the first edition some lines of a rude stamp appear: the Bard's own good sense, or the remonstrance of the critics, in duced him to amend them in the next edition. These lines—

> "Until, wi' daffin weary grown,
> Upon a knowe they sat them down ;"

stood thus in the Kilmarnock edition :—

> "Till tired at last wi' mony a farce,
> They sat them down upon their a—,"

And thus in the original manuscript :—

> "Till tired at last an' doucer grown,
> Upon a knowe they sat them down."

Two rougher and less tasteful lines occupied the place of the following:—

> "And clear the consequential sorrows
> Love-gifts of Carnival Signoras."

The "Two Dogs" of Florian converse upon the affairs of the world, and satirize courts, camps, and colleges:—the "Twa Dogs" of Burns, talk only of matters connected with their different households, nor do they say any thing which is not in character:—Cæsar's hatred to the "blastit wonner," the whipper-in, is quite natural—and Luath's barking with gladness in the midst of the family joy is a fine touch of truth. The aim of the Poet was to make the peasantry contented with their humble condition: he discusses the great question of human enjoyment with much knowledge, and refuses to consider wealth as happiness:—

> "A country girl at her wheel,
> Her dizzens done, she's unco weel:
> A country fellow at the pleugh,
> His acres tilled, he's right eneugh."

Here Burns speaks from his own experience.—"The poems of observation on life and characters," says Jeffrey, "are the 'Twa Dogs' and the various Epistles, all of which show very extraordinary sagacity and powers of expression."

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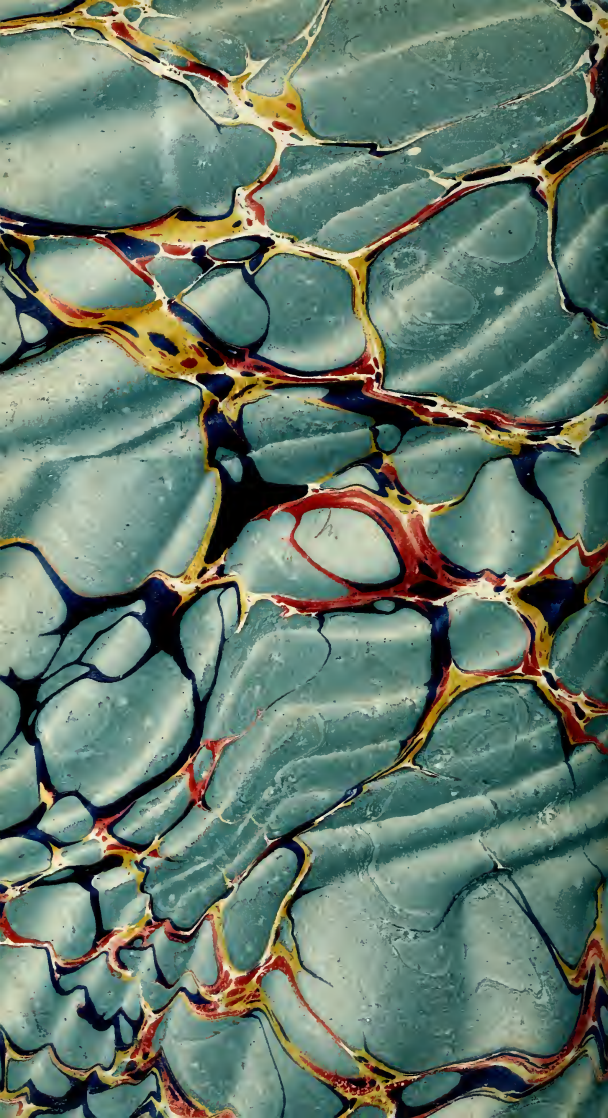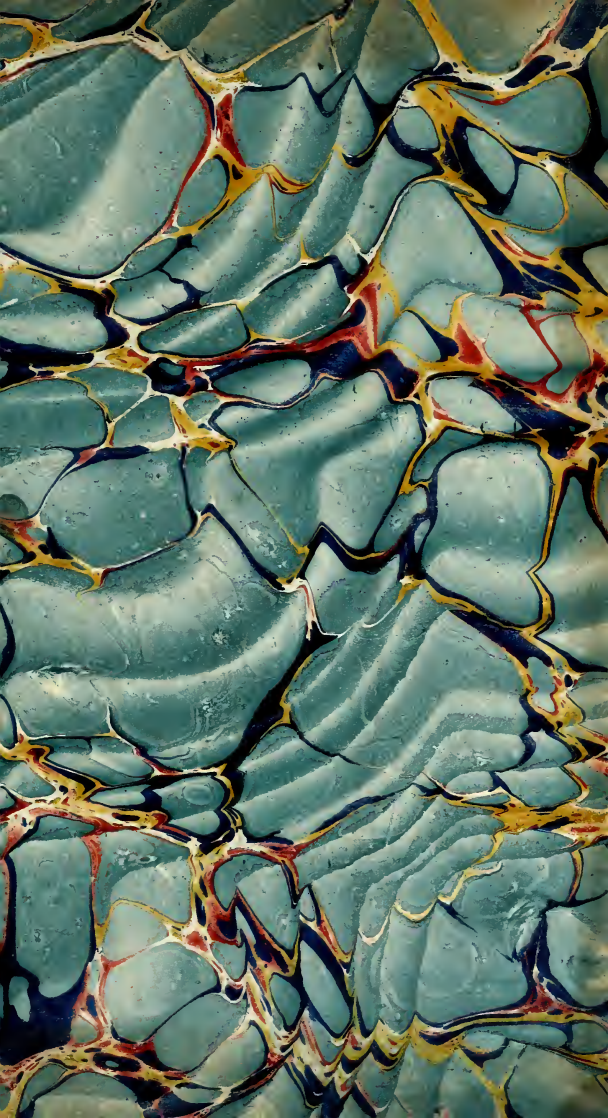
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